TAUNTON'S OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996 NO. 17

Three Hearty Chicken Fricassées

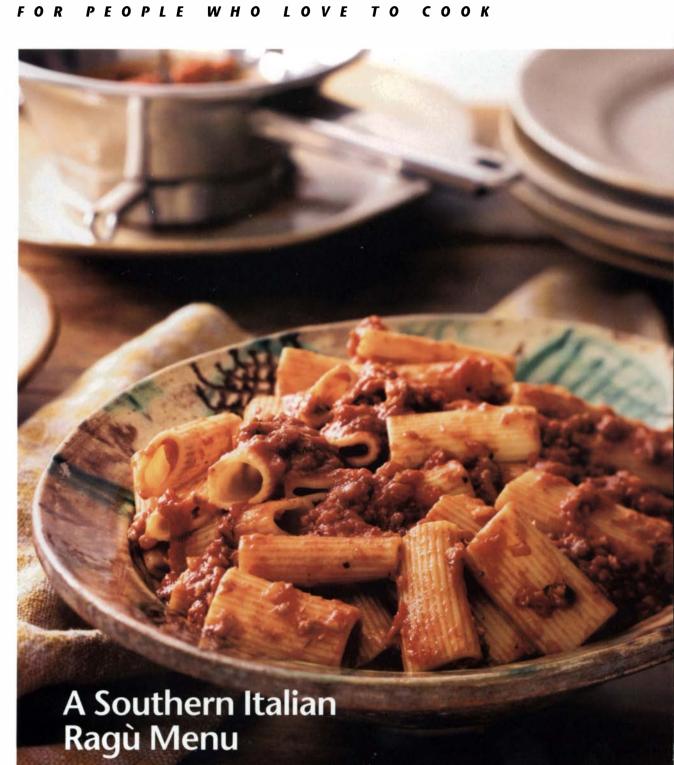
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Bertolli Dolce Pane con Zucchine

3 cups flour 3 cups shredded, unpeeled

1 1/2 cups sugar zucchini

2 tsp. cinnamon 1 1/2 cups dark raisins 1 tsp. salt 1 1/2 cups golden raisins 1 tsp. baking powder 1 cup walnuts, chopped

1 tsp. baking soda 2 tsp. vanilla

1 cup Bertolli Extra Light Olive Oil

In a large bowl mix together the flour, sugar, cinnamon, salt, baking powder, baking soda, zucchini, raisins and nuts. In another bowl beat together the eggs, vanilla and olive oil. Pour over flour mixture and stir until thoroughly mixed. Pour batter into 12 greased individual Bundt'lette® molds to 2/3 full. Bake at 350°F for 30-35 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean or pour batter into two 9x5-inch loaf pans, baking at 350°F for 1 hour and 20 minutes.

Lemon Icing

1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar

1 tsp. lemon zest

3 Tbsp. lemon juice

1 Tbsp. Bertolli Extra Light Olive Oil

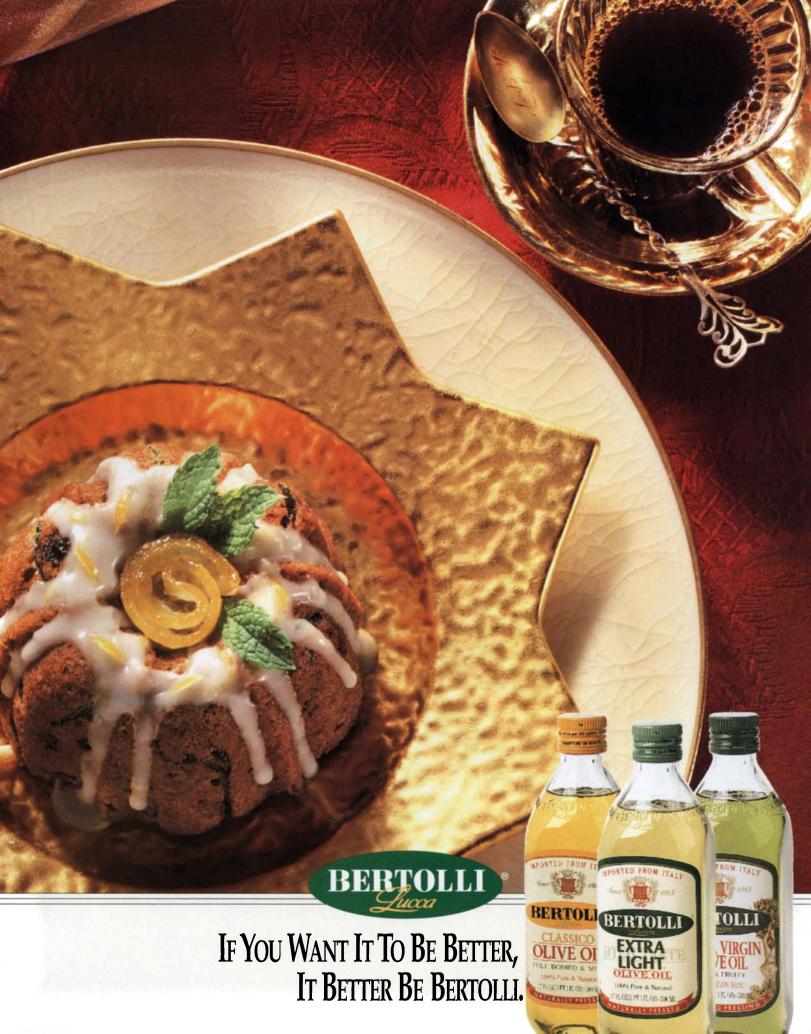
In a small bowl, combine all icing ingredients. Drizzle on room-temperature cake.





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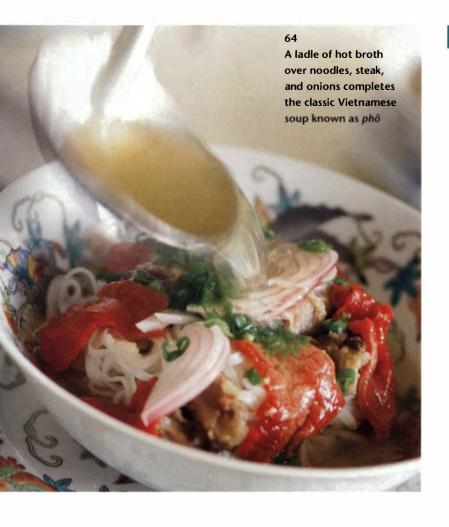




The sweet, nutty flavor of green acorn squash is a welcome taste of fall

october/november 1996 ISSUE 17 OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996 ISSUE 17

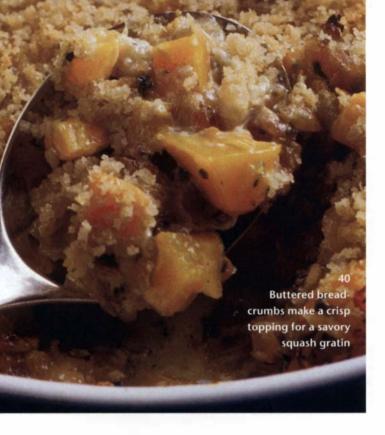




DEPARTMENTS

- 6 Letters
- 8 **Q&A**Baking chewy oatmeal cookies; harvesting and storing pecans
- 14 At the Market
 Winter squash from
 sweet to nutty
- 18 **Notes**Cassis; a great grater;
 Calphalon bakeware
- 20 **Technique Class** Cutting up a chicken
- 24 Kitchens for Cooks Choosing cabinets for your kitchen
- 30 **Tips**Keeping sauces warm;
 recorking wine

- 74 Basics A cook's guide to vinegars; skinning nuts
- 78 Food Science The secrets of tender, flaky pie crust
- 80 **Flavorings**Aromatic star anise
- 82 Reviews
 Essential cookbooks
 for fish lovers
- 86 Calendar
- 87 Advertiser Index
- 93 Recipe & Technique Index
- 93 Nutrition Information
- 94 Tidbits I Was a 98° Weakling



ARTICLES

34 A Traditional Southern Italian Ragù

by Paul Bertolli

Slow-braised beef yields a rich sauce for a pasta first course, and the meat itself follows as a succulent main dish

40 Baking Golden Vegetable Gratins

by Deborah Madison

All sorts of vegetables, from potatoes to artichokes, taste delicious under a crust of breadcrumbs or cheese

45 A Light, Airy Puffy Pancake

by Bette Kroening

Showy as soufflé but easy as a flapjack, this golden pancake can be flavored with apples, cheese, or almost anything else

FLAVORINGS AND TOPPINGS—SAVORY AND SWEET 47

48 Three Hearty Chicken Fricassées

by Dennis Baker

Gentle simmering is the key to tender chicken and a savory sauce

52 A New Twist on Tamales

by Stephan Pyles

Extra mixing time is the secret to light, tender tamales

57 Master Class: Making a Country Pâté

by Katherine Alford

Generous seasoning and gentle cooking create a savory, succulent pâté

62 Kitchen Scales for the Savvy Cook

by Maggie Glezer

Measuring by weight rather than by volume can make you a better baker

64 Vietnam's Classic Soup Is a Whole Meal in a Bowl

by Nguyen Thi Thai Moreland Phō combines an aromatic beef broth with tender noodles, hot chiles, and a cool squeeze of lime

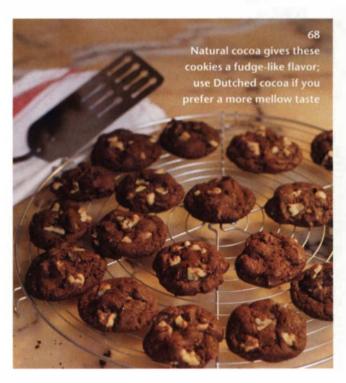
68 Rediscovering Cocoa

by Alice Medrich

This pantry staple can surpass chocolate for sophisticated flavor in desserts from brownies to frozen mocha

On the cover: Pasta & Ragù Sauce, "A Traditional Southern Italian Ragù," p. 34.

Cover photo: Mark Thomas. These pages: top left, Scott Phillips; bottom left, Alan Richardson; above, Laurie Smith; below, Carl Duncan.



If you'd like to share your thoughts on our most recent articles or your food and cooking philosophies, here's the place to do so.

Send your comments to Letters, Fine Cooking,

PO Box 5506, Newtown,

CT 06470-5506.

Grilling pizza

Your article by W. Park Kerr, "Grilling Pizza on Your Barbecue" (Fine Cooking #15), brought back memories.

In 1986, Michigan was under a record heat wave, and we too had to resort to barbecuing our pizza to get out of a hot kitchen. We used standard baking sheets with small holes drilled in the bottom and assembled the pizzas in them as if we were preparing them for the oven. The first pizza was burnt in three minutes. Later we regulated the heat by overturning an empty baking sheet and setting it on the grill. On top

(radiant) heat. Thus, a 2.6kW element has the same heat output as an 8,900 Btu/hr gas burner, and each will boil a gallon of water in a little over eight minutes (plus some extra time to heat up the cookware, coils, etc.). Gas burners and conventional electrical coils, when set on high, always deliver their full rated power, but the currently popular smooth-top radiant elements cycle on and off if the cookware isn't sufficiently smooth to prevent the glass surface from overheating.

> —Donald Candela, Granby, MA

A better buttercream

Loveyour magazine! For the first time, I want to offer a difference of opinion. In Fine Cooking #14, the article on buttercream frosting is interesting, but there is an easier method offered by Rose Levy Beranbaum in her book, The Cake Bible. She calls it Neoclassic Buttercream, and it "yields identical results" and it's a lot easier. I quote, "Some of the sugar and all of the water is replaced by corn syrup. (Corn syrup, by volume, is about half the sweetness of sugar, so ½ cup is needed to replace the 1/4 cup sugar.) The corn syrup provides just the right amount of water so that, when brought to a full boil, the temperature of the syrup is exactly 238°F. There is no need to use a thermometer. The corn syrup also prevents crystallization." Even though I'm a traditionalist and enjoy the challenges of classical baking, I now use her method exclusively, as it is faster and nearly foolproof.

—Carole Kimball, El Cajon, CA ◆

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The truth about Btu vs. watts

eight to ten minutes in a closed

grill. Our pizza was crispy,

smoke flavored, and delicious.

—Janice LaQuiere,

St. Clair Shores, MI

Contrary to an assertion in your Q&A column in *Fine* Cooking #15, there is a direct comparison between electric range elements measured in watts and gas burners measured in Btu/hr. Any student of science or engineering knows that 1 watt equals 3.412 Btu/hr, and that all the electrical power used by a range element eventually emerges as heat or infrared

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How to make a chewy oatmeal cookie

How can I get chewy oatmeal cookies? I've tried insulated baking sheets, adding molasses, and a low oven temperature, all to no avail

—Christine Park, Farmington, CT

Maggie Glezer replies: Cookie chewiness is related to the sugar in the cookie. When sugar is first added to a cookie dough, it's crystalline. As the cookies bake, the crystals dissolve into a syrup. Cookies just out of the oven are soft because the sugar is still dissolved and fluid. Cookies harden as they cool when the sugar recrystallizes.

To make chewy drop cookies, you need to keep the cookies' sugar in a syrup. One way to do this is to underbake the cookies. Underbaking in-

creases the cookie's water content, which in turn keeps the sugar dissolved.

Another factor is the proportion of sugar in the recipe. Drop cookies with more sugar will brown faster than those with less sugar. These sweeter cookies will, in a sense, automatically underbake because they'll look fully baked sooner than those that are less sweet.

Finally, lowering the temperature of the oven only increases the baking time because browning is slowed, so the cookies end up being dry. The following recipe, which I've adapted from an old Betty Crocker standard, is my family's favorite.

Chewy Oatmeal Cookies

Yields 4 dozen cookies.

8 oz. (16 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
2 packed cups brown sugar
1 tsp. salt
2 tsp. vanilla extract
½ cup milk
8 oz. (1¾ cups) unbleached all-pur pose flour
1 Tbs. baking powder
12 oz. (4 cups) old-fashioned oats

Set an oven rack on the top position and heat the oven to 375°F. Beat together the butter, brown sugar, salt, vanilla, and milk until well combined. Combine the flour, baking powder, and oats; add this mixture

to the butter mixture and stir until thoroughly blended.

On ungreased baking sheets, drop the dough in heaping tablespoonfuls, leaving at least 2 inches between drops. Flatten the drops with wet hands. Bake until the edges of the cookies are brown, about 12 min. on regular baking sheets; 12 to 14 min. on insulated sheets. You may need to rotate the sheets after 5 min. to ensure even browning. Remove the cookies from the baking sheets immediately and let them cool on a rack.

Maggie Glezer teaches and writes about baking in Atlanta.

Whatever happened to baker's cheese?

When I lived in Wisconsin, I had no trouble finding baker's cheese at local grocery stores. Now I can't find it anywhere. Is there another name for it, or a substitute?

—Gerry Hoefer, Arlington, VA

Linda Funk replies: Baker's cheese fell out of favor a while back and has been off the market for the last ten years. A dry-curd cheese, it was sold in 8- or 16-ounce tubs, like cottage cheese or ricotta. Baker's cheese is still made in bulk on special order—thousands of pounds at a time—for bakeries and pastry



Determine the chewiness of oatmeal cookies by controlling the sugar.

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8

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companies that use it in fillings and cheesecakes, but it's no longer available to consumers.

I'd recommend substituting ricotta or a half-and-half version of dry-curd cheese and ricotta. Most bakers now use dry-curd cheese for pastry fillings. It's similar to ricotta cheese, only drier. Dry-curd cheese actually has more uses; in addition to being a pastry ingredient, it makes a tasty and less runny filling for lasagne and stuffed pasta than ricotta or cottage cheese do. If you can't find dry-curd cheese in the store, you can make your own by draining ricotta of its whey. Simply line a funnel with cheesecloth, set it over a jar, spoon the ricotta into the funnel, and put the whole setup in the refrigerator

to drain the ricotta. In four to six hours, you'll have drycurd cheese.

Linda Funk is the director of national product communications for the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board.

Harvesting and storing pecans

We have two pecan trees, and we don't know what to do with all the nuts. How do we harvest and store them? How long will they keep?

—Tom Harris, Fort Worth, TX

John McGlynn replies: After they fall from the tree in autumn, gather your pecans and shuck them as soon as possible; pecans should not lie on the ground in their husks for more than two or three days; otherwise, dew and rain will discolor them.

Spreadthe shucked pecans on a ventilated surface (a screen works well) to dry for two to three weeks. After this time, crack the nuts. Cracked pecans will stay fresh in the refrigerator for up to three months. If you want to store the nuts longer than that, freeze them, but before you do, pull them out of the re-

Pecans should be shucked, dried, and cracked before they're stored.

frigerator to dry for 24 hours. Pecans will hold their taste and quality in freezer storage for up to two years. I find ziptop plastic bags to be best for both refrigerator and freezer storage.

John McGlynn is a nut gatherer for l'Etoile Restaurant in Madison, Wisconsin, and selfproclaimed "nut" from Cazenovia, Wisconsin.

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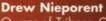
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Cooking acidic foods in foil

I've read that I shouldn't cook high-acid foods in aluminum cookware. On the other hand, I've seen recipes for cooking fish that call for wrapping the fish in aluminum foil, along with a generous helping of salsa, which of course contains tomatoes and lime juice. Any problem here?

—Chazz Milerno, Berkeley, CA

Shirley O. Corriber replies:

It's perfectly safe to cook something so acidic in aluminum foil; neither the cooking period nor the acid concentration are significant enough to elicit a harmful reaction. But remove the food promptly from the foil after it's finished cooking. If acidic foods remain in contact with aluminum foil for an extended period, the acid would eat away at the metal, in this case forming aluminum salts that would end up in the food. While we all need trace amounts of these compounds, larger doses are poisonous.

Shirley O. Corriher, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, teaches food science and cooking classes across the country.

Are unopened clams unsafe?

I've heard that it's dangerous to eat a steamed clam that hasn't fully opened. Is this true?

—Candace Camille, Los Angeles, CA

Jon Rowley replies: A clam that hasn't opened after being

steamed is belligerent, but not dangerous. If you cook it longer, it will eventually open, unless you're dealing with a "mudder"—a clamless shell that has filled up with mud. Mud-filled shells are sometimes held together by a vacuum that can survive cooking.

Mudders, a not-too-common but natural occurrence, can be detected by listening for a dull thud when knocking on it with another clam.

The number of clams that stay unopened in the bottom of the pan after steaming may depend on the species. For instance, manila clams grown in the Pacific Northwest open

at pretty much the same time when cooked.

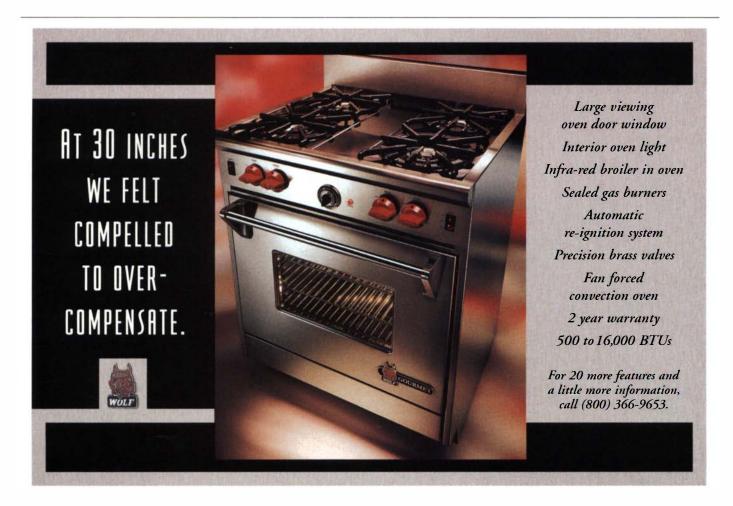
Notso of our Pacific
Northwest littlenecks, which are erratic and uncooperative. The unopened
ones have behavioral
problems, but they
won't harm you.

Jon Rowley, of Seattle, is a consultant to seafood restaurants and retailers and to the seafood

industry.



A steamed clam that won't open isn't dangerous, just stubborn.



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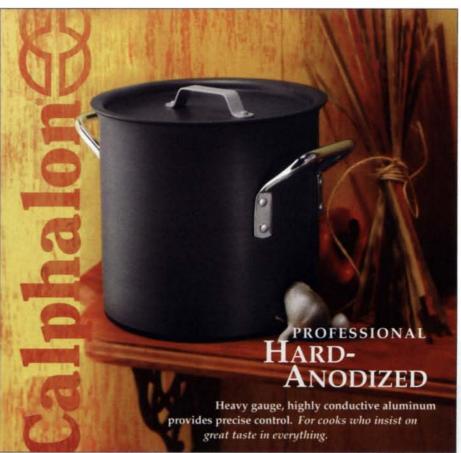
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Butternut squash has a finely grained, bright-

Winter Squash from Sweet to Nutty



Acorn squash can be white, gold, or green. The white and gold have pale flesh, a grainy texture, and a bland, faintly nutty, sometimes acrid flavor. The green is my favorite: its orange-yellow flesh has a sweet, nutty flavor and smooth texture that purées beautifully and needs little seasoning beyond salt and pepper.

Sweet dumpling is at its peak of flavor when the skin turns creamy yellow streaked with orange. The pale

yellow-gold flesh is slightly grainy, with a distinctly nutty flavor. A small squash, often weighing less than a pound, sweet dumpling can be stubborn and difficult to cut through.

When stacks of hardskinned winter squash start appearing at farmers' markets and roadside stands, I know that autumn is truly here. Bins, boxes, and wheelbarrows filled with dozens of different squashes in an array of green, orange, gold, and red displace the waning season's zucchini, tomatoes, and eggplant and inspire me to come indoors to cook my favorite cold-weather squash dishes.

Winter squash are extremely versatile in the kitchen. Puréed for a soup or baked in a pie shell, they can be prepared in many different ways and adapted to recipes for almost every course of every meal. Their flavor can be mild or quite sweet and their texture can range from dense to light.

Although all squash varieties originated in the Americas, they're now grown and

eaten throughout the world. A favorite soup in Southeast Asia combines winter squash with coconut milk and tofu, while in the Philippines, thick orange-fleshed squash slices are fried with onions, garlic, and pork chops. In Central America, winter squash is often found sugared and crystallized, and in Italy and southern France, it's puréed for ravioli fillings and cheesetopped gratins. Here at home,

Americans love their squash baked with lots of butter and brown sugar or in sweet pies spiked with cinnamon.

Choose squash that feel solid and heavy. As winter squash lose freshness, they dry out and become lighter, even spongy. The skin should be hard with no signs of softness.

Winter squash are keeper vegetables. Protected from easy spoilage by their hard





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skin, most winter squash will last a month or longer stored in a cool, dry place—in the basement or garage or on a kitchen counter. Once the squash has been cut open, it should be wrapped tightly in plastic, refrigerated, and used within three or four days.

The biggest challenge in cooking winter squash is cutting one open. I've had some close calls—nearly slashing myself more than

once while trying to stab through an obstinate acorn squash or a stubborn kabocha. Finally, following a friend's sworn method, I dropped a big 12-pound hubbard on a cement patio. It broke nicely into three pieces, making it easy to scoop out the seeds. I've since used this method for any especially hard skinned squash.

Another, less dramatic method is to insert the point

of a large chef's knife into the center of the squash and carefully cut down. Rotate the squash and repeat on the other side. Winter squash with less formidable skins, such as delicata and butternut, can easily be sliced into halves or rounds.

Once a winter squash is cracked or cut open, remove the seeds and any particularly fibrous strings surrounding the seed cavity. I usually

leave the skin on if I'm baking or steaming the squash, but otherwise I peel it before cooking.

Georgeanne Brennan grows all types of squash on her farm in northern California. She has written several cookbooks, including Potager: Fresh Cooking in the French Style and The Vegetarian Table: France (Chronicle, 1992 and 1995). ◆



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One of California's most imaginative vintners has released a new dessert wine. Bonny Doon's Cassis, made from an infusion of black currants, is remarkably well balanced and less viscous and cloying than the French liqueur crème

Bonny Doon's Cassis is less cloying than French crème de cassis. Try it in salad dressings in place of vinegar.

de cassis. Its vivid flavors are supported by a pleasing acidity, warmed by alcohol with just the right amount of sugar. True to the experience of eating fresh black currants, the Cassis finishes with a slight astringency.

Because Bonny Doon's Cassis has the weight of wine rather than a liqueur, I found it more useful in cooking than crème de cassis. Try it as a substitute for vinegar in salads with duck, pigeon, or fall fruits such as pears, figs, and pomegranates. Mix a little of it with dry white wine for a particularly fragrant Kir. (Just don't count on the sugary finish you would normally get if you had used the sweeter crème de cassis.) Or you may just decide that Bonny Doon's Cassis, with its distinctive musky, earthy aroma, is too good to dilute, and you'll simply enjoy it on its own.

Bonny Doon's Cassis costs about \$9 for a 375ml bottle. For more information, call

the Bonny Doon vineyard in Santa Cruz, California, at 408/425-3625.

—Chef and restaurant consultant Paul Bertolli is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.

A great grater

Anyone who has ever grated chocolate on a standard box grater and watched it fly all over the kitchen will want to try the Porcelain Grating Dish from Progressive International. This dish looks like an old-fashioned juicer, but its "moat" surrounds a raised flat grater with dozens of sharp teeth. Grated chocolate accumulates in the moat, which has a spout, making it easy to dust the top of a cake or pie.

I used it to grate ginger, peeled and unpeeled, with excellent results—and without scraping my knuckles, even when using small pieces.

Grating lemons takes a bit longer than when using a standard grater, but clean-up is a breeze because you don't have to pick out recalcitrant bits of zest from grating holes. Just rinse the grater with soapy water and it's clean.

Though the photo on the grater's box shows a carrot being grated, a standard grater is actually better for carrots unless your recipe calls for them to be grated very fine. I'd stick to other graters for hard cheeses for the same reason.

This grater does such a great job with so many ingredients that most cooks and bakers will find it invaluable. It's available from the *King Arthur Flour Baker's Catalogue* (800/827-6836) for \$12.95 and from Zabar's in New York City (212/787-2004).

—Judith Sutton is a food writer who has worked as a cook and pastry chef at several Manhattan restaurants.

Calphalon turns to bakeware

As the author of several dessert books, I long ago learned to appreciate the value of pans that bake evenly and won't warp or bend. Now Calphalon has introduced professional-quality bakeware that can stand up to a workout in kitchens like mine. The new line includes sturdy baking sheets with easy-togrip raised ends, round and square cake pans that are a desirable two inches deep, loaf pans with smooth interior seams, and regular, mini, and muffin-top muffin tins.

Made from heavy-gauge aluminum or aluminized steel with durable nonstick interiors, these pans heat quickly and hold heat evenly. All are



Cakes release evenly from Calphalon's new loaf pans and muffin tins.

easy to clean after a brief soak in soapy water.

Cakes I baked in the round and loaf pans released easily, and cookies baked evenly on the heavyweight baking sheets. (Dark-finished pans absorb more heat than shiny pans do, so you may have to adjust cooking times.)

The pans range in price from \$15 for a small baking sheet to \$24 for a rectangular cake pan or muffin tin. Available in department stores and cookware shops, they come with a lifetime warranty.

—Elinor Klivans puts her pans to use testing recipes for books such as Bake & Freeze Desserts and her upcoming Bake & Freeze Chocolate Desserts. ◆



The Porcelain Grating Dish finely grates chocolate, ginger, and lemons.

18 FINE COOKING

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Quartering a chicken gives you four equal-size portions for sautéing, stewing, barbecuing, or baking.

Cutting up a Chicken

uying a whole chicken Dand cutting it up yourself has many advantages. The most obvious benefit is that a whole chicken can cost half as much as one that's sold in parts, and nothing needs to go to waste. By cutting the bird yourself, you'll get pieces that look exactly the way you want. You may also find a better selection at the supermarket, since many organic and free-range birds are sold whole rather than in parts. In addition, you can use what's left over—usually the backbone, the wing tips, and the giblets—for stock. Freeze

Removing the legs



Cut off the wing tips. Set the chicken squarely on a cutting board. Fold open the wing nearest you and cleanly slice through the first joint. Save the wing tips to make stock.



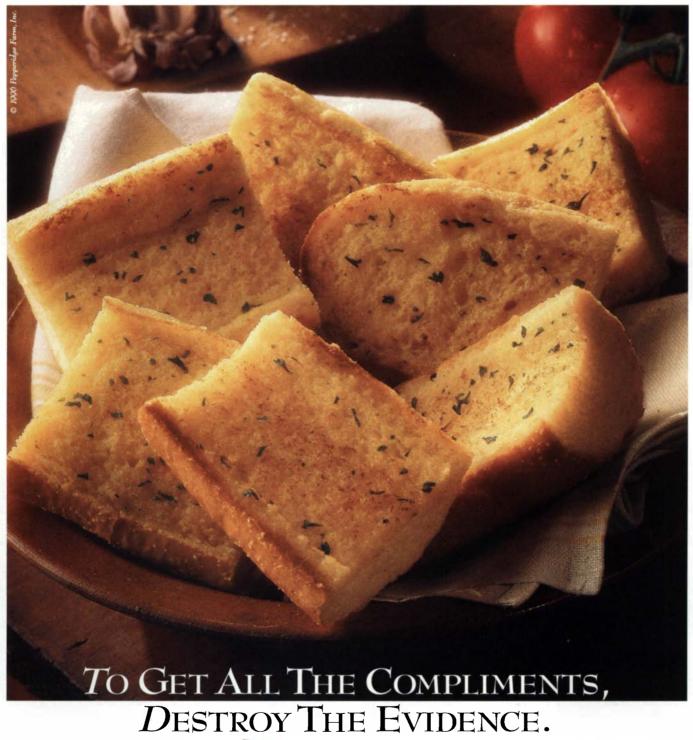
Separate the leg from the breast. Pull the drumstick toward you. Use the tip of a knife to cut through the skin diagonally. Stay close to the thigh, leaving the skin on the breast intact. Often there's a pale strip of fat just under the skin to guide you.



Snap the thigh away from the backbone. Push your thumbs down into the opening between the thigh and the breast and fold the thigh away from the chicken's body until you see the joint snap out of the back. Gently tug the leg away from the carcass.



Cut the leg away from the chicken. Following the contours of the backbone, trim around the "oyster"— the tender nugget of meat close to the backbone—and leave it attached to the thigh, not the back. Repeat with the other leg.





No one needs to know such a tasty garlic bread can be found in your grocer's freezer.



TECHNIQUE CLASS

Separating the breast from the back



Whack through the ribs with a heavy chef's knife. Holding the chicken with the pointed end of the breast up, use a chopping motion to separate the whole breast from the back.



Snap the backbone away from the breast. Hold the breast in one hand and push down on the backbone with the other. With this action, the wishbone is exposed.



Cut along the wishbone to fully remove the back. Aim for the point where the wings join the breast, being careful to leave them attached to the breast. Save the back to use for stock.



Cut the breast in half. Lay it skin side down and cut through the center of the cartilage. With poultry shears, cut off any pieces of wishbone and rib that remain attached to the breast.

these until you have enough to make a worthwhile stock, or use them right away to enrich a small amount of sauce or cooking liquid.

Every cook approaches cutting chicken differently. Some begin with the wings, others the legs. Some cut a chicken into eight, six, or—the method presented here—four pieces. The number of pieces depends primarily on

the size of the chicken. Quartering a 3- to 4-pound bird provides four good-looking portions for sautéing, stewing, barbecuing, or baking. For larger birds—or smaller portions—you can make more pieces by separating the thighs and drumsticks into two pieces and cutting each breast in half crosswise. Another technique is to cut the whole wing off the breast,

which makes the wings viable pieces themselves.

Some chefs use a cleaver to cut up chicken; others prefer poultry shears. I use a heavy chef's knife for almost all the cutting and then pull the carcass apart with my hands. If poultry shears are handy, I'll use them to cut through the chicken's ribs and maybe to cut off the ends of the wing joints and drum-

sticks, but a knife works just as well.

Cooking chicken on the bone makes it much tastier and juicier. It's also best to leave the skin on and let it baste the meat as it cooks. One problem cooks often encounter when cooking quartered chicken is that the breasts cook faster than the thighs. If you cut the bone out of the thighs (but not out of the legs) as shown at left, they'll cook in about the same time as the breasts.

Sometimes I like to further trim the chicken legs for a more elegant presentation by neatly removing the round ends of the drumstick with poultry shears or a cleaver.

Remember to thoroughly clean knives and cutting boards after working with raw poultry. I wash mine in a bleach solution.

James Peterson, a contributing editor for Fine Cooking, teaches cooking across the country. His latest book is Fish & Shellfish (William Morrow, 1996). ◆

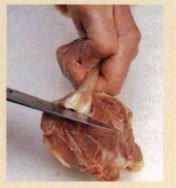
Boning thighs for even cooking



Cut under and around the thigh bone. Use the tip of a knife to free the bone that runs through the center of the thigh without slicing through the thigh meat.



Scrape the bone clean. Push the meat down and off the bone with the tip of your knife to expose the joint.



Snap the thigh bone away from the drumstick. Twist the bone with your hand until it separates at the joint. Leave the leg bone in place.

22 FINE COOKING







OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996

Choosing Cabinets for Your Kitchen

abinets are the back-bone of a well-designed kitchen. They define work-space and their layout determines how well a kitchen functions. Cabinets can actually make cooking easier by keeping the tools you need most close to where you most need them. Having your pots close to the stove, your plates near the dining table, and the onions near the cutting board will save you steps and help organize the room.

But buying cabinets requires learning the language of cabinetmakers. Framed and frameless, laminates and color cores are foreign phrases to most cooks, and it's not unusual to become intimidated and confused when choosing



Frameless cabinets have doors and drawer fronts that cover the entire face of the cabinet. Originally a European design, these are now common in American kitchens.

cabinets. Deciding what works best for your kitchen is easier if you know a bit about cabinet construction and design.

CABINET CONSTRUCTION

Every cabinet is built as a simple box with a back and sides, called a case or carcass. Cases are built in units of various sizes and shapes and are arranged to fit your kitchen. The three basic forms are base cabinets, which sit on the floor under countertops, sinks, and stovetops; wall cabinets, which hang above the counters; and tall cabinets (also called fullheight cabinets), which run from the floor almost to the ceiling, something like a builtin hutch or pantry.

Cabinets must be built for strength. Whether they support granite countertops or shelves full of dishes, all cabinets must be sturdy. The pop-



Framed cabinets present a traditional look. The face frame, separating the doors and drawer fronts, adds structure and style to these maple cabinets.

face frame (see photo at left). The doors are hinged directly to the inside of the case with concealed hinges so that when the doors are closed, they cover the entire front of the cabinet. This detail, called flush overlay, gives a kitchen a sleek, contemporary look.

With frameless cabinets, there's nothing in the way as you move things in and out, place, you can fashion almost anything you want, but the choices can be mind-boggling.

Natural wood is the most popular material for kitchen cabinet facades. Oak, birch, ash, pine, and maple are typical; walnut, mahogany, and cherry are also available but cost more. The final appearance and character of the wood depends on the stain. Stains range from neutral to dramatically dark and from wood tones to bold colors. Regardless of the wood and finish you choose, expect the wood to darken and develop a rich patina over time. Ultraviolet light will darken almost all woods, especially cherry and mahogany.

Painted finishes come in a tremendous range of colors. The most important element in choosing a paint finish is to select one that's durable and easy to clean. Oilbased enamel offers a slick appearance and is long lasting.

All well-made wooden cabinets, whether natural,

All wood cabinets are coated with a finish to protect them from grease and grime.

ular American technique is to make *framed cabinets* by attaching a hardwood face frame to the front of the case (see photo above right) for strength and stability. The frame also provides a surface for attaching door hinges.

Frameless (or Europeanstyle) cabinets are built so that they don't need a stiffening and the drawers are roomier. But frameless cabinets may cost more, and they can "rack," or slant if not carefully installed.

CHOOSING MATERIALS FOR CABINET FAÇADES

Doors and drawer fronts transform cabinets from utilitarian storage units into beautiful furnishings. In today's market-

24 FINE COOKING

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KITCHENS FOR COOKS

stained, or painted, will have a finish applied to protect them from the grease and grime that accumulate in an active kitchen. The best will look as good as new for years.



Generous pantry shelves fold neatly into these full-height cabinets.

Plastic laminate surfaces are easy to care for. Laminate refers to a type of construction where a plastic veneer is fused or glued to a compressed craft-paper core. As with all cabinets, these range from poorly made to top quality. The best have a solid-color core so there's no



Roll-out bins for recyclables and trash eliminate clutter in the kitchen.

dark seam showing around the edge of each door and drawer. Better brands offer more choices in terms of style, color, features, and finishes (glossy, matte, aggregate, or embossed).

STYLE DETERMINES COST

As you choose materials and finishes, a picture of the overall style of your kitchen develops. Cabinet doors and drawer fronts should coordinate with this picture. Some of the choices are raised panel, flat panel, tongue-in-groove, and mullioned glass. Some even have carved designs.

Top-quality cabinets with flat wooden doors may cost as much as \$30,000 for a medium-size kitchen. The same cabinets could cost up to \$36,000 with raised-panel

doors and jump as high as \$60,000 if you choose leaded glass doors. Shop around to find doors that suit your design and budget.

THREE WAYS TO BUY

As you shop for commercially manufactured cabinets, you'll come across the terms stock, semi-custom, and custom. On the surface, the somewhat fuzzy distinctions between the three may make you question their different price tags.

The most popular and least expensive are stock cabinets. These are mass-produced and sold completely assembled at kitchen showrooms and home improvement centers. They only come in standard sizes and shapes. For stock cabinetry, measure your kitchen and then map

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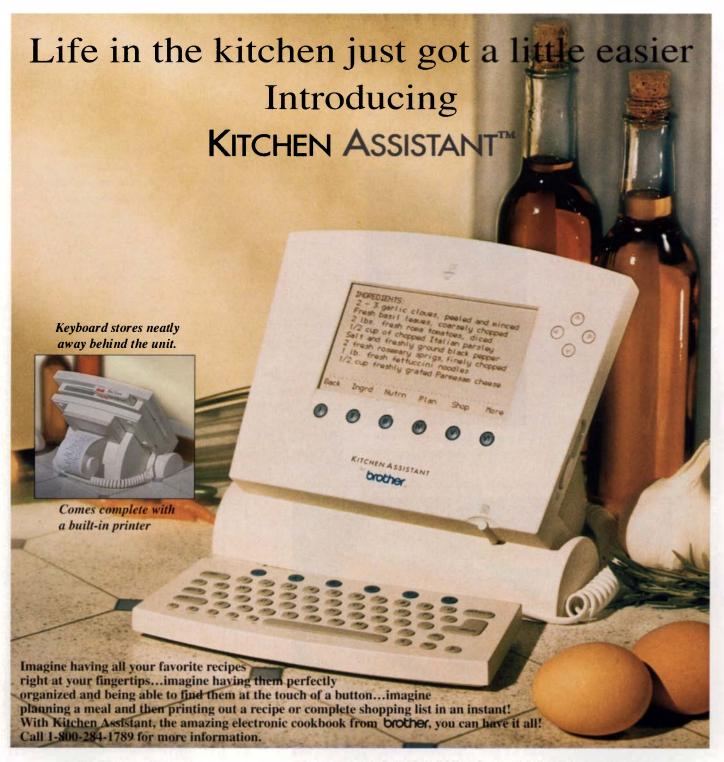
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KITCHENS FOR COOKS

out an arrangement of cabinets to fill that space. If you want anything other than standard, you're out of luck. Filler strips are sold to make up for any small gaps and make it look like a perfect fit. Since stock cabinets are available in limited styles and finishes, you may end up designing your kitchen around your cabinets, not the other way around.

Semi-custom is a step up from stock in terms of cost, variety, and quality. While there's still no opportunity for customizing, semi-custom cabinets come in a wide selection of colors, materials, and styles. Unlike stock cabinets which are completely built in advance, semi-custom ones must be assembled to order from manufactured components so you have greater leeway in terms of size and style. If

your space is simple and relatively straight, semi-custom can work well and look great.

Choose custom cabinets if you envision a complicated kitchen design. Factory-built to your specifications, custom



A pop-up mixer stand keeps small appliances nearby but out of sight.

cabinets can include unusual angles, curves, and dimensions. They cost more, but you get a generous choice of materials, finishes, and styles, along with top-quality construction.

A FOURTH OPTION— HIRE A CABINETMAKER

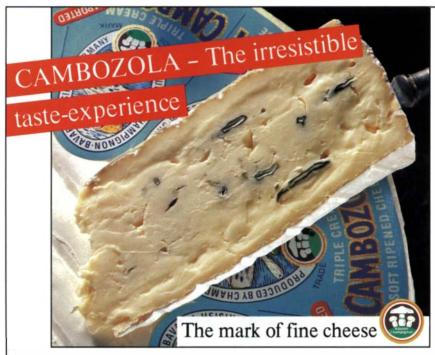
Local cabinetmakers offer a tremendous range of quality and style and can customize cabinets to suit your kitchen. Some can be quite expensive and only the best are worth the price. Ask to see examples of work before settling on a cabinetmaker.

Certified kitchen designer Don Silvers is a consultant and teacher at UCLA. He's the author of Kitchen Design with Cooking in Mind (NMI, 1994) and is on the Internet at sildesigns@aol.com.

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Beyond shelves and drawers, consider other interior options, such as:

- swing-out spice racks or spice drawers
- metal bread-box drawers
- appliance garages
- roll-out pantries and shelves
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- ◆ cookbook cases
- recycling and trash bins
- ♦ adjustable shelving
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- tray and baking-sheet storage
- ♦ lazy Susans



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Variations: Enjoy adding these combinations to the basic recipe - green olives and chives, chopped; fennel and chives, chopped; rosemary, chopped.

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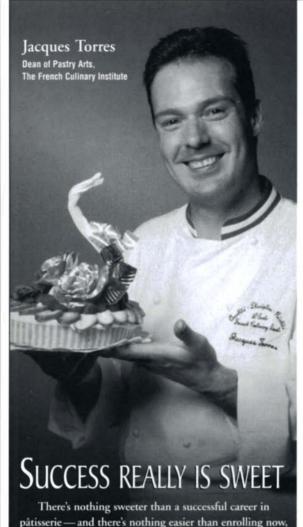
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OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996

Crisping cabbage with salt

I like cabbage in coleslaw or other salads to be crisp, so I soak the whole cabbage in ice-cold salt water. I dissolve a heaping tablespoon of salt in a large bowl of water, soak the cabbage for 5 to 10 minutes, rinse it briefly with cold water, and then dry it with paper towels before I grate or chop it.

—Bonnilyn Buckley,

Fill pastry bags easily

To fill a pastry bag hands-free, put the pastry tip in the bag, tuck some of the material near the tip into the tip itself (to prevent the filling from falling through), and support the pastry bag in a large measuring cup or straight-sided bowl. This also prevents the bag from falling over.

—Lisa Jung, San Rafael, CA

Fillmore, NY

Instant homemade "ravioli"

Sandwich fresh herbs inside ready-made wonton or eggroll wrappers and then boil until tender. They're lovely when served in a light herbal stock.





Squeeze cooked spinach dry in a potato ricer.

Potato ricer squeezes out liquid

To remove almost all the liquid from cooked spinach or grated zucchini, I use a potato ricer. I put a handful in at a time, give it a few gentle squeezes, and the vegetables are virtually dry.

—Janet Fee, San Jose, CA

Keep scallions from scattering

I love using finely chopped scallions, but I don't like chasing scallion wheels that careen off the cutting board. To make the scallions stay put, I cut a slit down the length of the scallion white before I start chopping.

—Diana Tarasiewicz, Grand Junction, CO

Keep sauces warm

If you want to serve a *beurre* blanc at your next dinner party but don't want to cook it at the last minute, make it several hours ahead of time

and store it in a wide-mouth thermos. The thermos keeps it warm without separating.

> —Maureen Fox Lucas, La Canada, CA

Spray-bottle liqueurs make haste, not waste

When you want to moisten cake layers with liqueur, use a spray bottle to mist the layers evenly. Use a funnel to pour any extra liqueur back into the original bottle.

—Mary Sullivan, Coronado, CA

A candle burns off onion fumes

A strange-but-true method for fighting off onion tears: light a candle and set it right next to the onions on the cutting board before you start chopping. The sulfur in the flame burns off the onion's sulfuric compounds before they have a chance to reach your eyes.

—Julie Kohl, Folsom, CA



t's easy to improvise with pork. ** Sauté or broil cutlets for sandwiches. (Try different marinades—like Italian salad dressing, teriyaki sauce, even olive oil and orange juice—you get the idea) ** For burritos, fill flour tortillas with stir-fried pork strips, taco seasoning, onion and bell pepper plus chiles, cheese, lettuce or whatever. ** Sprinkle chops with garlic powder (oregano and lemon-pepper, too, if you like) and sauté in olive oil. Serve with pasta and veggies. For more great ideas, write us. Or just open your cupboard. Send a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope to: Recipes Ad, Box 10383, Des Moines, IA 50306. Or visit us at http://www.nppc.org/





IF YOU'VE GOT IT IN THE KITCHEN, IT PROBABLY GOES WITH PORKL







TASTE
WHAT'S
NEXT

pork
The Other White Meat

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Council in cooperation with the National Pork Board

Heat a baking sheet for a flaky pie crust

When making a pie with an unbaked crust, put a baking sheet in the oven to heat at the same time. When the oven is hot, set the filled pie directly on the hot sheet. The crust will begin to cook on contact with the hot metal, and it will be flakier and crisp.

—Helen D. Conwell.

Fairhobe, AL

Peeler removes chile seeds

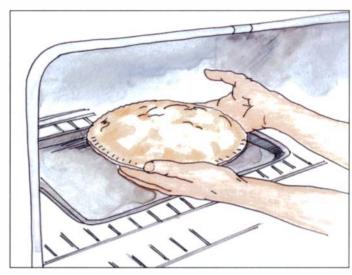
Use a swivel-bladed vegetable peeler to quickly remove the seeds from chiles without burning your fingers. Slice off the top of the chile and slide the peeler's blade inside the chile until the tip reaches the bottom. Turn the peeler in a circle to pry the seeds loose. Most of the seeds will come out when you pull out the peeler, and you can tap out any stray seeds.

I like this method because it lets me remove the seeds quickly while leaving the chile whole.

> —Michael Koutsodontis, Houston, TX

Vacuum-sealing zip-top bags

When you fill plastic zip-top bags for the freezer, you need to remove as much air from the bag as possible to prevent freezer burn. This is easy to do for liquids, but there's a trick for dealing with solids. Put the food in the bag, insert a drinking straw into one end of the bag, and close the zipper up to the straw. Pinch the zipper and bag around the straw and suck out the air (yes, with your mouth). Then quickly pull out the straw and finish the zip. It's almost as good as a vacuum pack, and it will



For a flakier, less soggy pie crust, put your pie on a hot baking sheet.

considerably extend the life of your frozen goodies.

—Russ Shumaker, Richmond, VA

Butter makes a cheese plane useful

Remember that cheese plane in the back of the gadget drawer? Run it across a stick of cold butter for a thin, quick-melting ribbon of butter—perfect for buttering your toast or bagel.

—Philippa Farrar, Santa Barbara, CA

Recorking wines

Don't pour out that halffinished bottle. Here's a gadget-free way to make it last a little longer. Pour some of the wine into a glass, dip in the cork, and tamp the cork back into the bottle so that it's flush with the top of the bottle's lip. If the cork needs further tamping, position the bottle perpendicular to a wall or a cabinet, corked end against that surface, and heave a quick hip thrust to jam the cork the rest of the way in. When you're ready to re-open the wine, use a corkscrew as you did the first time vou uncorked it. The wine may not last as long as it

would with a preserving gadget, but it will stay leakproof when carted home from a tasting and laid down on its side in the fridge.

—Virginia Morisot, Ridgefield, CT

Ginger and sherry keep together

To always keep chopped ginger on hand, preserve it in sherry. Peel about a pound of ginger and chop it in a food processor. Transfer the ginger to a jar that has a lid, pour in enough sherry to cover, and screw on the lid before putting it in the refrigerator. If you run low on ginger or sherry, just add more. The ginger keeps indefinitely. Not only does it make ginger easily available, but you can use the ginger-flavored sherry to make great sauces and salad dressings.

> —W. J. Schroeter, Santee, CA

Save that butter wrapper

Quick-bread recipes often call for a stick of butter. When preparing such a batter, instead of discarding the empty butter wrapper, I use it first to grease the loaf pan and then set it, printed (nonbuttered) side down, on the bottom of the loaf pan and then fill the pan with the batter. The paper makes it easier to turn the bread out of the pan without sticking.

> —Jillayn M. Lindahl New Brighton, MN

Old pans bake unevenly

If your baking pans are scarred with blackened, baked-on spots, consider replacing them. Those dark areas can cause uneven baking.

—Gayle Roberson, Hightstown, NJ

Deglazing cleans pots and pans

Here's how to make clean-up easier when your skillet or other pan has a caked-on residue in the bottom. After cooking, remove all the food and set the pan on the stovetop until it's hot. With the pan still on the flame, deglaze it with water. Almost all the residue will be lifted up from the bottom.

—Jim Harb JimHarb@aol.com

Lid holders

Hang onto those racks you once used to organize longplaying record albums. They make terrific holders for pot and pan lids so the lids don't clang around in your kitchen cabinets.

> —Don Silvers, Los Angeles, CA

Flat dough rolls more easily

When I make pie dough, I shape the dough into flat disks instead of balls before I chill it. This makes the chilled dough easier to roll out.

—Sandy Dameron, Grandview, MO ◆

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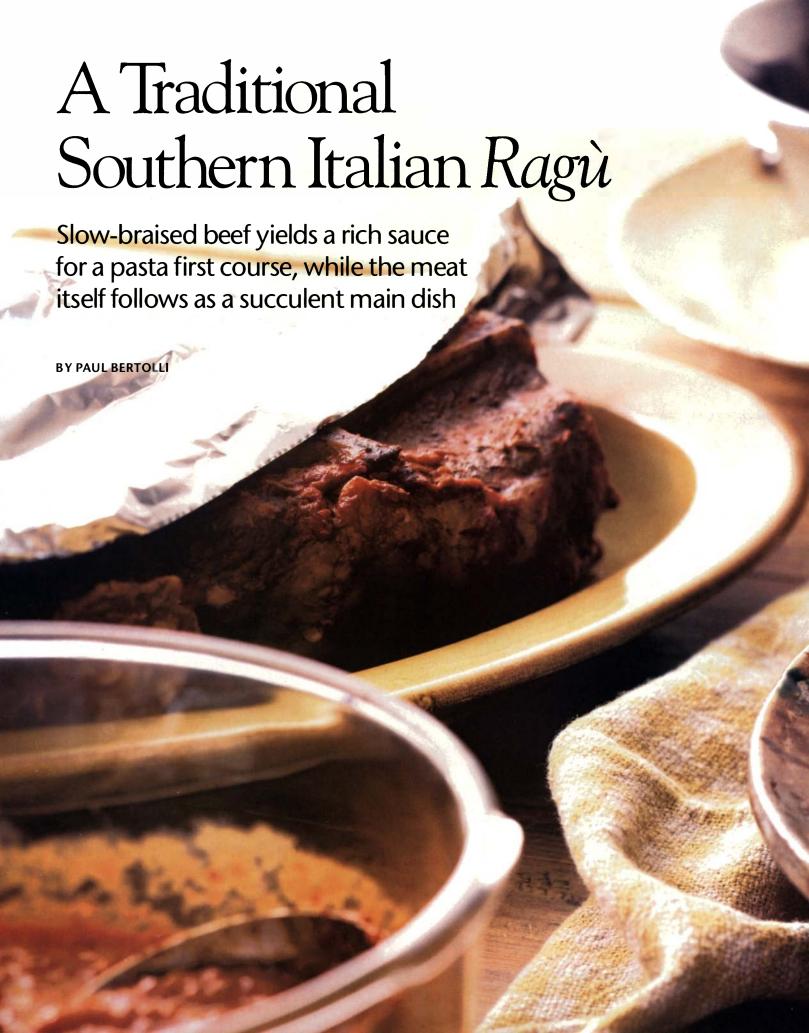
anyone else ready to give up onion chopping by hand, maybe forever? And its talents range from peanut butter making to orange juicing to grating even ice Parmesan. o r

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 \mathbf{T} o engage an Italian, particularly a southerner, in a discussion of $rag\hat{u}$ is to elicit much more than a casual conversation about cooking. For $rag\hat{u}$ is not merely a pasta sauce, it's a symbol that evokes the perfume of Naples, the Sunday family table, and a collective nostalgia for what is good, generous, and comforting.

Many dishes go by the name ragù, and their ingredients and the way they are made vary from region to region in Italy. In its pure form, ragù is a braised meat sauce. There are two principal types: the first uses ground or hand-chopped meat and is found particularly in the north of Italy. Ragù Bolognese is the best-known example.

In southern Italy, the tradition is to make a full meal of ragù and to enjoy it in two courses. First comes pasta served with a sauce rendered from the slow braising of beef. Then comes the main dish—the meat, which has become fragrant from its exchange with the sauce and tender over the course of its slow simmering.

For a ragù with the truest, most direct flavor, deglaze the pot with water.

LONG, SLOW COOKING MAKES MEAT TENDER AND SAUCE SAVORY

Ragù results from a languid cooking process, during which the flavors of the meat and of aromatic vegetables are gently extracted and concentrated. Characteristic of all great braises, the various components meld into one harmonious surge of flavor.

You can use just about any kind of meat—beef, veal, lamb, goat, or pork—to make a *ragù*. Whatever meat you choose, select a cut from one of the working muscles; they tend to have more flavor and become more succulent after braising. I like to use beef shoulder meat, which is often labeled as chuck.

To make $rag\hat{u}$, you'll need a heavy-based casserole or a saucepot with a wide surface area and sides that are at least four or five inches high. The pot should be large enough to contain the meat comfortably. Never use a nonstick pot, as its surface discourages a glaze from forming. You'll also need a food mill to purée the braising liquid for the pasta sauce.

FOUR STEPS TO A SOUTHERN ITALIAN RAGU

Begin by browning the meat and the aromatic vegetables; then deglaze the pan and reduce the liquid several times. Next, set the meat to braise. Finally, when the meat is fully cooked, pass the braising liquid through the food mill to make the pasta sauce.

Browning furnishes a savory basis for the *ragù*. Brown the meat slowly over low heat to encourage a



Tender braised beef follows the pasta in a crescendo of flavor. The meat flavors subtly present in the sauce are fully expressed in the second course.

leisurely build-up of caramelized juices on the bottom of the pot. When the meat is well browned, remove it, add the aromatic vegetables, and let them soften and brown. (If cooked together, the vegetables would burn in the time it takes to brown the meat.)

Repeated deglazing and reducing produce a richly flavored ragù. As the meat and vegetables cook, a glaze forms on the bottom of the pot. The next step is to loosen this glaze and incorporate it and all its inherent flavors into the ragù.

Water, broth, and wine are the traditional deglazing liquids. For a *ragù* with the truest, most direct flavor, I like to use water. Sometimes I use beef broth to fortify the meaty flavor of the *ragù*. Wine contributes depth and acidity, but I rarely use it. I find there's sufficient body and acidity in meat-and-tomato—based sauces.

Whatever type of liquid you use, add only a small amount at a time. Deglaze the pan, reduce the liquid, and repeat, again using only a small portion of the liquid. Adding all the liquid at once makes a ragù that lacks complexity and depth.

Continue to deglaze and reduce until all the liquid has been added. This repeated deglazing and

36 FINE COOKING



reducing is what gives ragù an intense underpinning of flavor.

When the reductions are complete, stir in the tomatoes. (Reducing the tomatoes would make the *ragù* overly acidic.) Bring it all to a simmer and let the *ragù* bubble pensively for several hours until the meat is quite tender. When the meat is done, set it aside and pass the cooking liquid through the food mill to make the sauce for the pasta.

ROUNDING OUT THE MENU

In Italy, ragù is often preceded with an antipasto to awaken appetites. Generally speaking, slightly salty, vinegary foods do this job best. For this menu, I've chosen a simple marinated eggplant enlivened with fresh mint. In keeping with the southern Italian tradition, you may wish to serve marinated artichokes or sweet peppers, a shellfish salad, or simply steamed mussels seasoned with olive oil, garlic, or parsley. A bowl of olives would be welcome, too.

When choosing a vegetable to serve with the meat, look around your market for what is freshest and in season and prepare it accordingly. Quickly cooked vegetables, whether lightly sautéed or steamed, provide a pleasing contrast to the long-cooked meat. Slowly braised vegetables, such as fennel, cabbage, or the green beans in this menu, work equally well because of their likeness to the texture of the meat.

A robust meal needs a light dessert. A filling meal like this one is best ended with a refreshing

dessert that isn't overwhelming. I like these dried figs stuffed with walnuts and poached in a brandy syrup with a hint of licorice flavor from the addition of anise and Pernod. Serve them simply as they are in a small bowl with an uncomplicated cookie or with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Baked Marinated Eggplant

If you can't find Italian eggplant, the Japanese variety is a good alternative. Like the Italian, it has a dense flesh with fewer seeds and less water than the globe variety. Serves six to eight as part of an antipasto.

1½ lb. Italian eggplant
¼ cup olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 Tbs. finely diced red onion
2 Tbs. red-wine vinegar
4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

1 Tbs. chopped fresh mint

Heat the oven to 375°F. Cut away the eggplant stem, and cut the eggplant lengthwise into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices. Brush the slices on both sides with olive oil and sprinkle them with salt and pepper.

Pour enough water into two sheet pans to just cover the bottoms. Arrange the eggplant slices side by side on each pan. Cover with foil and bake for 25 min. Remove the foil and bake until the eggplant has dried somewhat, 15 to 20 min. Take care during the second stage of the cooking to remove the eggplant before it sticks to the pan.

Transfer the cooked eggplant to a large serving platter. In a small bowl, combine the red onion and vinegar. Add a pinch of salt and pepper. Stir to dissolve the salt. Stir in the extra-virgin olive oil and mint. While the



Tangy, marinated eggplant is a powerful summons to appetite and a good way to begin a rich, filling meal.



Figs poached in brandy are a simple ending to a satisfying meal.

The warm spiced syrup is a delicious contrast to vanilla ice cream.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996

eggplant is still warm, spoon a little of the vinaigrette over each slice. Let stand for 30 min. Serve the eggplant at room temperature as part of an antipasto.

Ragù in Two Courses

This recipe yields enough pasta sauce for at least two meals (12 to 16 portions) and meat enough for one meal. The excess sauce will keep for about a week in the refrigerator or for a couple of months in the freezer. Serves six to eight, with sauce left over.

8 cups hot water ½ oz. dried porcini mushrooms 2 Tbs. olive oil 5 lb. blade-in beef chuck, cut 21/2 inches thick Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 4 oz. pancetta, sliced thick 4 oz. pork skin, blanched in boiling water for 7 min. (to remove some of the fat) and cooled (optional) 1 carrot, diced fine 1 large rib celery, diced fine 1 medium yellow onion, diced fine 1 cup tomato paste 1 Tbs. sugar 3 cups stewed, crushed tomatoes 4 cloves garlic, chopped coarse 11/2 to 2 lb. pasta, such as rigatoni or penne rigate Freshly grated parmigiano-reggiano or ricotta salata

Pour 4 cups of the water over the porcini; set aside.

Heat the olive oil in a large, heavy-based casserole that's big enough to contain the meat with room for the vegetables and sauce. Sprinkle the meat with salt and pepper on both sides and put it in the pot. Adjust the heat so the meat sizzles gently. Brown the meat thoroughly on both sides, turning it over every so often as its juices rise to the surface. This will encourage the formation of the glaze on the bottom of the pan. Pay attention to the



Slow cooking coaxes the maximum flavor out of the green beans. Their color won't be as bright as quickly cooked beans, but they'll have a wonderful texture and a deep, rich flavor.

heat so that the meat and the glaze don't burn. The browning process should take about 40 min.

Add the pancetta and blanched pork skin and brown for another 10 min. Remove the meat from the pot, leaving the pancetta and pork skin behind. Set the meat next to the stove on a platter to keep it warm. Add the diced carrot, celery, and onion to the pot. Allow the vegetables to soften and brown for about 15 min. Meanwhile, pour the porcini through a fine strainer, reserving the soaking liquid. Chop the porcini coarse and add them to the pot with the vegetables.

In a large bowl, stir together the tomato paste and sugar. Add the porcini soaking liquid and use a whisk to blend. Stir in the crushed tomatoes.

When the vegetables are thoroughly browned, add the chopped garlic and stir until it releases its fragrance. Don't brown the garlic.



Raise the heat to high and immediately begin deglazing the pot. Add about 1 cup of hot water at a time and use a wooden spoon to loosen the glaze on the bottom of the pot. Allow the brown juice to reduce entirely and the glaze to form again. Add another cup of water; reduce and deglaze again. Repeat this step until you have used 4 cups of water. Add the tomato mixture, ease the meat back in, and bring the sauce to a very gentle simmer.

Braise the meat, uncovered, for $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 hours, until it is quite tender, turning it halfway through. If the sauce thickens too much, add water. (The meat should remain submerged for most of the cooking.) Transfer the meat to an ovenproof platter, spoon a little of the sauce over it, cover tightly, and keep it in a warm oven. Remove the pork skin from the sauce and discard it.

Pass the sauce through the coarse blade of a food mill. Work vigorously to push through all the solid content of the sauce. Degrease the sauce if necessary and season it with salt and pepper.

Cook the pasta, figuring about $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. per person. When al dente, drain the pasta and toss it with half of the sauce and a little water over heat to coat the noodles completely. (Reserve the remaining sauce for another meal.) Serve the pasta immediately in warm bowls with freshly grated parmigiano-reggiano or ricotta salata.

When finished with the pasta course, cut the meat into chunks and pieces (slices are difficult because of the bone).

Long-Cooked Green Beans with Oregano

Long-cooked green beans are a fine accompaniment because of their likeness to the texture of the meat. Serve the beans hot or at room temperature. Serves six to eight.



A food mill produces a sauce with the best texture. Work vigorously to press through all the solid contents of the sauce.

4 Tbs. olive oil
6 cloves garlic, chopped coarse
Leaves from 8 sprigs of fresh oregano
1¾ lb. mature string beans
2 tsp. kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
Juice from 1 lemon
½ cup water

Warm the olive oil in a heavy-based pot over medium heat. Add the garlic and oregano and soften gently for about 2 min. Put the beans in the pot, add the salt, and grind a little black pepper over all. Add the lemon juice and water and bring to a boil. Immediately reduce to a simmer, cover the pot, and cook the beans for 20 min. Remove the cover and cook the beans until nearly all the liquid in the pot has evaporated, 30 to 35 min. During this time, turn the beans over upon themselves with tongs to mix them and coat them with the reducing juices. Allow to cool briefly and serve.

Drunken Figs with Anise

The figs and their warm syrup taste wonderful paired with vanilla ice cream. Serves six to eight.

1 lb. dried Black Mission figs
2 oz. shelled walnut halves, cut or broken into two pieces
1½ cups white wine
¾ cup lemon juice
¾ cup sugar
¾ tsp. anise seed
½ cup brandy
1 Tbs. Pernod

Wash the figs with warm water and drain. Working one by one, make a slit in the belly of each fig to create a small pocket. Put a piece of walnut in the pocket and press the fig back together.

In a medium saucepan, combine the white wine, lemon juice, sugar, anise seed, and brandy. Bring the liquid to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer. Add the figs and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the figs are tender, about 40 min. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the Pernod. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Paul Bertolli, a contributing editor for Fine Cooking, is the chef/owner of Oliveto in Berkeley, California. ◆



A tiny slit in the belly of the fig makes a pocket for a piece of walnut. Pinch the seam back together before poaching the figs.



Wine Choices

Fruity Italian red wines pair well with tomato and strong seasonings

For this hearty Italian menu, you'll want easydrinking wines that support the flavors in each dish rather than dominate them.

Fruity Italian reds are great wines for tomato, and for any hot pepper you might decide to add. These wines love garlic, onions, and herbs—even assertive herbs like oregano and mint. Heading straight to the south, try Corvored from Sicily; Lacryma Christi or Taurasi by Mastroberardino from the Campania; or a Montepulciano d'Abruzzo.

Medium-weight reds from farther north would also be fine companions for this menu, such as Chianti by Antinori or Ruffino, or Barbaresco by Ceretto. —Rosina Tinari Wilson, a

—Rosina Tinari Wilson, a food and wine writer and teacher, is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.

Baking Golden Vegetable Gratins

All sorts of vegetables, from potatoes to artichokes, taste delicious under a crust of breadcrumbs or cheese

BY DEBORAH MADISON

here's something about the beautifully browned crust and the wafting aroma of vegetable gratins that makes them irresistible. Even people who swear they hate artichokes or can't stand turnips will gladly eat them once the vegetable has been moistened with a little cream, topped with cheese, and baked.

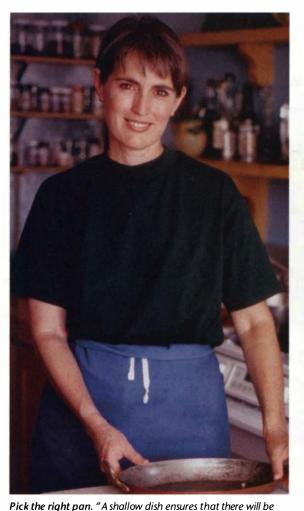
The potato is perhaps the most famous vegetable for gratins, but many vegetables take well to being gratinéed: layered in a shallow baking pan, often blanketed with milk or cream, and baked until the vegetables are tender and the top—usually enhanced with a sprinkling of breadcrumbs or cheese—has transformed into a savory crust. Gratins are classic accompaniments to grilled and broiled meats, but I also like to serve them on a bed of braised greens as a simple main dish.

THE BAKING DISH IS SO IMPORTANT, ITS NAME REFLECTS ITS PURPOSE

Like a terrine or an omelet pan, a gratin dish is designed with a particular purpose in mind. Gratin dishes may be oval, rectangular, or round and can be made from clay, glass, porcelain, or metal, but they must be shallow—no more than two inches deep—with a wide surface area.

A VEGETABLE'S CHARACTERISTICS AFFECT HOW THE GRATIN IS PREPARED

When choosing vegetables for a gratin, think about their body, starch content, ability to absorb or render liquid, and how long they'll need to cook.



plenty of the savory, golden crust—everyone's favorite part—to go around" says Deborah Madison.

The glory of a gratin is its crust. Here, grated cheese provides a delicious foil to the savory mix of potatoes and celery root that lies just beneath it.



OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996

The potato is the classic gratin vegetable. Its starchy texture both absorbs the cooking liquid and thickens it, making the dish divinely creamy. Potatoes with more starch (baking potatoes, for example) may bake more tender than those with less starch, but they may not hold up as well. Those with less starch (like boiling potatoes) bake slightly firmer and hold their shape better; the choice is yours.

My favorites are Yukon Golds and Yellow Finns: both have great flavor, texture, and a rich, golden hue. They also have less starch than baking potatoes so they hold up well, but they cook more tender than waxy potatoes.

Potatoes cook slowly and absorb a lot of liquid, as do parsnips, turnips, rutabagas, winter squash, and carrots. All these vegetables need added liquid, and all benefit from being partially cooked before being baked in the gratin. Vegetables that don't absorb liquid, such as leeks,

artichokes, and onions, also need added liquid and benefit from a quick precooking. Those vegetables that give off liquid when baked, such as spinach, tomatoes, and summer squash, can be gratinéed rawand without additional liquid.

Don't limit yourself to one vegetable per gratin. Using two or three different vegetables gives a gratin a more satisfying, complex flavor. And combinations allow you to use small amounts of vegetables that wouldn't go too far on their own, such as a lone fennel bulb or a few artichokes added to a potato and onion gratin. Potatoes add such a wonderful texture to gratins that I often add some slices even if another vegetable is the star of the dish.

The size of the vegetable determines the character of the gratin. Vegetables are often sliced for layering, but dicing, grating, or cutting them into julienne strips is also common. When making a gratin as the main dish, I usually leave the pieces larger so they're more filling and rustic looking. A finer, more uniform texture suits side dishes. Keep in mind



Thin slices make tender layers. If you're using raw vegetables (like this celery root) in your gratin, cut them into thin slices to ensure that they'll cook through. Partially cooked vegetables can be cut a little thicker.

Grated cheese is a classic topping for gratins. Gruyère is wonderful with potatoes and celery root, but an Italian fontina, an American Cheddar, or in half the amount, a creamy Gorgonzola are worth considering as well.





Caramelized onions give this butternut squash gratin a richer, more complex flavor. The sweetness of slow-cooked onions is well matched with the natural sugars in the squash.

that size will affect cooking time: a gratin made of thin slices of artichokes will cook in less time than one made from whole artichoke bottoms.

Precook vegetables for tender gratins. Some vegetables, such as tomatoes and spinach, cook quickly and can be simply sliced or chopped and used for a gratin without being cooked first. But most vegetables benefit from being partially cooked before they go into the gratin dish. This initial cooking speeds up baking time, which means the top won't brown before the vegetables have become tender. If you do use raw vegetables, slice them very thin so that they can absorb the liquid and cook completely before the crust browns.

LIQUID HOLDS IT ALL TOGETHER

When people think of gratins, they often think of cream. That's because a good gratin is moist and satiny inside, even when cream isn't used.

The easiest—and a delicious—way to make a gratin is to layer cooked vegetables in a buttered gratin dish, cover them with cream and a little grated cheese, and bake until the vegetables absorb the cream and a golden crust forms. This will never fail and will give you a very



The contrast of crisp crust and tender vegetables is what makes a gratin irresistible. Steaming the squash before baking ensures it will be tender.

filling, rich dish. I've found, however, that many people prefer a lighter feel to their gratins but still want great flavor and a hearty texture. So even when I make a gratin that calls for cream, I often use half-and-half, in part because it's a bit lighter,

A topping, whether it's cheese, nuts, or breadcrumbs, adds its own flavor and texture to a gratin.

and also because it doesn't separate at high temperatures the way cream can.

Milk also makes a good gratin, though I'll sometimes sprinkle a little flour between the layers of the vegetables to help thicken the liquid. A thin béchamel sauce, one that's properly cooked so that it isn't pasty, tastes richer than milk alone and gives the gratin a creamy texture.

Stock pairs especially well with starchy vegetables like potatoes. The starch mixes with the stock to make a

"creamy" sauce. If using stock, I like to make it from the trimmings of the vegetables used in the gratin to underscore the flavor of the finished dish. You can enrich a gratin made with milk or stock by pouring ½ cup cream over the top of the gratin about 20 minutes before the end of the baking time.

Finally, some gratins don't require any additional liquid. Summer squash, for example, releases enough water as it bakes to moisten itself.

MANY WAYS TO MAKE A CRUST

"To gratinée" means to brown and crisp the top of the casserole, and you can do this a number of ways. If you use cream, the liquid reduces and its natural sugar browns and forms a crust. An egg beaten with the cream or milk gives the crust a shiny finish. Cheese, chopped nuts, breadcrumbs moistened with olive oil or melted butter, or any combination of these, are often scattered over the top of a gratin. As the cheese melts, the nuts brown, and the breadcrumbs crisp, they add their own wonderful flavor and texture.

Baking turns the layers of vegetables, the liquid, and the topping into a unified dish with a meltingly moist interior and a crisp crust. If the liquid has been

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996

Celery Root & Potato Gratin

The flavor of celery root has an elusive quality that reminds me of truffles. Serves six as a side dish.

1 clove garlic, smashed
Butter for the gratin dish
1 lb. celery root, scrubbed
3/4 tsp. salt
1 lb. potatoes, preferably Yellow Finn or Yukon
Gold, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch slices
1/2 cup heavy cream
2 tsp. Dijon mustard
1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1 cup shredded Gruyère cheese

Heat the oven to 375°F. Rub a 2-qt. gratin dish with the smashed garlic, reserving what is left. Coat the dish with butter.

Peel the celery root; reserve the trimmings. Cut the celery root into quarters and then into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices. Put the trimmings and the remaining garlic in a 3-qt. saucepan and add 3 cups water and the salt. Set a steamer over the top of the liquid and bring the liquid to a boil. Steam the celery root just until tender, about 5 min., and then transfer it to a large bowl. Steam the potatoes over the same liquid just until tender, about

5 min. Toss the potatoes with the celery root. Strain the steaming liquid and reserve.

Combine ¾ cup of the reserved steaming liquid with the cream and mustard. Pour this over the vegetables, add the pepper, and toss. Pour the vegetables with the liquid into the gratin dish, smooth the top, and sprinkle with the cheese. Bake until the gratin is bubbling and browned on top, about 30 min.

Butternut Squash Gratin with Onion & Sage

To make butternut squash easier to handle, cut off the neck, peel it, and cut it into pieces to use in this gratin. Reserve the bottom of the squash, which contains the seed cavity, for roasting. Serves four to six as a side dish.

1 Tbs. butter; more for the gratin dish

1 Tbs. olive oil

2 large onions, chopped into 1-inch squares (about 4 cups)

3 Tbs. chopped fresh sage or 1 Tbs. dried

3 lb. butternut squash, peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes (about 8 cups)

2 cloves garlic, minced

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 1/2 cup plus 2 Tbs. heavy cream, heated until warm

1 cup fresh breadcrumbs 1½ Tbs. melted butter

Heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly coat a gratin dish with butter.

e, and It's the toasted top in the end that qualifies these roasted artichokes as s provides gratinéed. This recipe is a fine example of how uncomplicated a gratin can for this be. Parboiled before they're roasted, the artichokes are tender and flavorful tin. enough to be cooked without any added liquid.

In a large skillet over low heat, melt the butter with the oil. Add the onions and the sage. Cover and cook over low heat while you prepare the squash.

Put the squash in a steaming basket and set over simmering water. Cover and let steam until the squash is tender, about 10 min. Put the squash in the prepared dish with the garlic and ¾ tsp. salt. Toss gently to combine.

Continue to cook the onions, stirring frequently, until they caramelize, about 25 min. total. Season with salt and pepper and add them to the gratin dish, mixing them with the squash. Pour the warm cream over the vegetables. Toss the breadcrumbs with the melted butter and sprinkle the crumbs evenly over the gratin. Bake until the top is browned and bubbling, about 40 min.

Artichoke Gratin

Make this fresh, light gratin when artichokes are cheap and plentiful—in the fall and again in the spring. Serves four to six.

2 large lemons
8 large artichokes
1 Tbs. flour
1 tsp. salt
1 bay leaf
Oil for the gratin dish
1/3 cup dry white wine
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley
2 tsp. chopped fresh mar joram or 1 tsp. dried
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup fresh breadcrumbs
4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

Squeeze the juice from one of the lemons into a large bowl and add 3 cups of water. Trim and quarter the artichokes; scrape out the choke if necessary. As you work, drop the finished pieces into the acidulated water.

Squeeze the juice from the remaining lemon into a large, nonreactive saucepan. Add about 8 cups water, the flour, salt, and bay leaf, and bring to a boil. Drain the artichokes and add them to the boiling liquid. Cook until the artichokes are tender-firm, about 10 min. Drain.

Heat the oven to 375°F. Lightly oil a 2-qt. gratin dish. In a bowl, toss the artichokes with the wine and a little salt and pepper. Spread the artichokes evenly in the gratin dish. Toss together the parsley, marjoram, garlic, Parmesan, breadcrumbs, and 2 Tbs. of the olive oil. Sprinkle this evenly over the artichokes and drizzle with the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil. Bake until the gratin is heated through and the crumbs are brown, about 25 min.

Deborah Madison, author of The Vegetarian Table: America (Chronicle, 1996), lives, writes, and bakes gratins year-round in Santa Fe, New Mexico. ◆

A sprinkling of herbs, garlic, cheese, and breadcrumbs provides a crisp crust for this artichoke gratin.



A Light, Airy Puffy Pancake

Showy as soufflé but easy as a flapjack, this golden pancake can be flavored with apples, cheese, or almost anything else

BY BETTE KROENING

We see a lot of sleepy faces at our diner on Saturday mornings—until we pull the first pancake from the oven. It could be flavored with roasted chiles and Cheddar or with Grand Marnier, but it's the pancake's golden dome, rising above the pan, that turns heads. Each of these pancakes (sometimes called soufflé pancakes) sits as high as an entire stack of ordinary flapjacks and generously satisfies one or two early-morning appetites. In the time it takes to bring the pancake from kitchen to table, the occasional grumble of "good morning" changes to a chorus of "Wow, what's that?" and "Can I get one of those?"

Customers are dazzled by this dramatic dish, but puffy pancakes are actually easy to make. Beaten egg whites and sweet or savory flavorings are added to a rich pancake batter. Then this simplified soufflé-ina-pan is first cooked on the stovetop and finished under the broiler, where it gets its golden color.

EGG WHITES CREATE A DRAMATIC PUFF

Whether spiked with chives or sprinkled with sugarcoated pecans, all pancake puffiness has the same source: egg whites beaten just until they form soft, floppy peaks. Overbeating the whites makes a dry, bumpy pancake that breaks apart; underbeating yields flatter, heavier, and less impressive results.



Beat the egg whites at the last minute and gently add them to the batter in two stages so they won't deflate.

While you must beat the egg whites at the last moment, everything else can be prepared ahead of time. At the diner, we stir up a big batch of the pancake batter and measure it out as needed, but we whip the egg whites to order for each customer.

PUFFY PANCAKES CAN BE SWEET OR SAVORY

You can add flavorings to the pancake batter before folding in the egg whites or add toppings to the pancake as it cooks. Sometime we do both, like in the Apple-Brandy Pancake recipe opposite.

Flavor the pancake with grated Cheddar—or chocolate chips. The pancake base is a simple mix of flour, egg yolks, half-and-half, and a flavoring. You can add grated cheese or crumbled bacon, or something sweet like chocolate or maple syrup. Rum and liqueurs are also good here, but don't add too much; a tablespoon is enough to flavor the pancake.

Toppings are best for sweet pancakes. Sweet toppings stand up best to the heat of the oven. I like adding a sprinkling of nuts, berries, or apple slices. They add a beautiful final touch, and the heat of the broiler caramelizes their sugars.

A PUFFY PANCAKE NEEDS A HOT, SLICK PAN

Cooking this pancake in a slope-sided nonstick pan means there will be no problem convincing it to leave the pan and move onto a plate. Or, use a wellseasoned cast-iron pan. Just be sure the pan's handle is ovenproof or well wrapped with aluminum foil.

Even if you use a nonstick pan, you'll need to add some oil to the pan so the pancake won't stick. Before oiling the pan, set it over high heat until a drop of water dances on the surface. Then take it off the heat,



Arrange the topping when the batter has begun to set. Each pancake can hold about a cup of fruit without collapsing.

quickly brush it with vegetable oil, return it to the heat, and pour in the batter. This ensures that the pan is sufficiently hot but that the oil doesn't get scorched.

Three minutes on the stove and five under the broiler. The pancake needs about three minutes on the stovetop to begin firming the batter and to brown the bottom. When the top has set a bit, arrange any topping on the surface, and then pop the pan under the hot broiler. This gives a final boost to the puffy egg whites, cooks the pancake through, and gives it its golden-brown crown.

Keep a close eye on the pancake once you put it under the broiler to be sure it doesn't get too brown, especially if you've added toppings. If the top darkens before the pancake is cooked, gently drape a piece of foil over the pancake while it finishes cooking.

SERVING THE PANCAKE

Timing is critical as cooking draws to a close. Remove the pancake from the broiler while the middle remains a bit soft; you'll see it jiggle. If the pancake gets too dry under the broiler, it will deflate quickly.

After you take the pancake from the broiler, return it to the stovetop over medium heat for just a moment: this helps the pancake separate from the pan and finishes cooking the middle. Run a rubber spatula under it to loosen the bottom and edges and gently slide the pancake onto a warmed serving plate.

I dust sweet pancakes with confectioners' sugar and serve them with warmed maple syrup. Savory ones might need a grinding of pepper or a spoonful of freshly grated Parmesan. The most important serving tip is that, like any good soufflé, a puffy pancake waits for no one. Serve and eat immediately.



The pancake rises to its full height and turns golden brown under the broiler. If it browns too soon, gently drape it with foil.

The Basic Puffy Pancake

After you make the pancake base, beat the egg whites into soft, floppy peaks. Yields one 8-inch pancake; serves one or two.

3 eggs ½ cup half-and-half ¼ cup (1¼ oz.) all-purpose flour ½ tsp. sugar ½ tsp. salt 1 Tbs. butter, melted and cooled

Heat the broiler. Set a rack 4 or 5 inches below the heat.

Make the pancake base—Separate the eggs; set the whites aside. Beat two of the egg yolks (reserve the third yolk for another purpose) with the half-and-half. Add the flour slowly, stirring just to combine. Stir in the sugar, salt, and melted butter. (This is the time to add flavorings.)

Beat the egg whites until they form soft peaks.

Heat a heavy 8-inch frying pan with an ovenproof handle over high heat until a drop of water dances on the surface, about 30 seconds. While the pan is heating, gently fold the beaten egg whites into the batter in two stages. Brush the pan with a light coating of vegetable oil. Pour the batter into the hot pan, reduce the heat to medium, and cook until the bottom of the pancake is nicely browned and the batter begins to look dry around the edge, about 3 min. Gently arrange any prepared fruit, nuts, or other ingredients on top of the batter. (See sidebar at right for suggestions.)

Set the pan under the broiler. Cook until the top of the pancake is golden brown, about 2 min. If the center is still soft, loosely cover the pancake with foil to prevent burning and broil until the center is springy when touched, about 3 min.

To remove the pancake from the pan, briefly set the pan over medium heat. With a spatula, gently lift the pancake's edge to be sure it isn't stuck. Remove the pan from the heat, hold it over a warmed serving plate, and slide the pancake onto the plate. Serve immediately.

Apple-Brandy Puffy Pancake

Calvados, Normandy's famous apple brandy, intensifies the flavor of the fruit. The more affordable American applejack gives a similar boost. *Yields one 8-inch pancake; serves one or two.*

2 Tbs. unsalted butter

1 cup peeled, cored, and thinly sliced tart apples 3/4 tsp. ground cinnamon

1 recipe Puffy Pancake batter (see recipe at left) 2 Tbs. sugar

1 Tbs. Calvados, applejack, or other brandy

In a frying pan, heat the butter over medium-high heat. Stir in the apples and cinnamon and sauté until the apples are soft but still hold their shape. Set the apples aside.

Prepare the pancake batter and add the extra 2 Tbs. sugar and the Calvados. Gently fold in the beaten egg whites in two stages.

Cook the pancake following the directions at left, topping it with the sautéed apples before setting the pancake under the broiler.

Puffy Pancake with Red Pepper & Goat Cheese

To roast the peppers for this recipe, grill or broil them, turning occasionally, until the skin blackens and blisters all over. When cool enough to handle, peel off the skin and discard the seeds and ribs. *Yields one 8-inch pancake; serves one or two.*

1 recipe Puffy Pancake batter (see recipe at left), sugar omitted

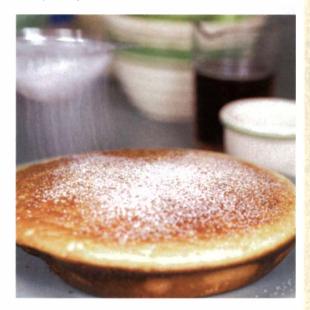
Pinch cayenne

2 oz. goat cheese

 1/s cup roasted, peeled, and diced red bell pepper or Anaheim chile, or 1/2 cup canned chopped green chiles, drained
 2 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley

Prepare the batter, substituting the pinch of cayenne for the sugar in the basic recipe. Add the goat cheese, red pepper, and parsley to the batter. Gently fold in the beaten egg whites in two stages. Cook the pancake following the directions at left.

Bette Kroening was one of the founders of Bette's Oceanview Diner in Berkeley, California. She co-wrote The Pancake Handbook (Ten Speed Press, 1994).



A perfectly cooked pancake will be springy and moist. Sprinkle confectioners' sugar on sweet pancakes and serve immediately.

FLAVORINGS AND TOPPINGS— SAVORY AND SWEET

Here are some of the ingredients I've used in and on puffy pancakes. Remember, a little bit of any intensely flavored liquid is good in the batter, and you can top it with anything that won't collapse the pancake's puff.



- rum
- ◆ Grand Marnier
- 1 cup berries tossed with
 - 1 tablespoon sugar
- sliced bananas
- ♦ chocolate syrup
- ♦ chocolate chips
- sugar (to createa caramelized top)
- ◆ chopped nuts
- grated cheese
- chopped avocado
- ♦ chopped scallions
- ♦ diced ham
- ◆ cooked crabmeat
- crumbled cooked bacon

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996 47

tos except where noted: Philippe Houze

Gentle simmering is the key to tender chicken and a savory sauce

BY DENNIS BAKER

learned to love fricassées as the delicious results of my dad's coldweather pheasant hunts: He'd cut up the bird, brown it in butter, and then simmer it slowly in broth with carrots and onions. Served in its own gravy, it was a feast I looked forward to each year.

I didn't know at the time that my father's stew was called a fricassée, or that there are innumerable variations on the recipe—I just knew it was one of the most comforting dishes I ever ate.

The definition of fricassée varies according to taste and tradition. My father's version starts by browning the bird in butter, adding a few chopped vegetables and some chicken stock, and simmering till it's done. Other versions skip the initial browning of the meat and finish by making a creamy white sauce from the cooking liquid. Either way, it's a soul-satisfying meal and easy to make, especially since you can use chicken—and you don't have to hunt for your main ingredient as my father did.

GREAT INGREDIENTS FOR A GREAT STEW

Chicken fricassée is one of those homestyle comfort foods that can be dressed up (the elegant Coq au Vin) or down (the classic Chicken & Dumplings). However you make it, a fricassée tastes best when your ingredients are the best you can find.

Use the best bird and broth. Traditionally, the bird of choice for a fricassée was a barnyard rooster about one year

Three Hearty



Coq au Vin is a robust fricassée. The flavor comes from first browning the chicken and then simmering it in red wine and a seasoned stock.

old. While a true *coq* can be hard to find, it's worth seeking out a large roasting chicken. Older, bigger birds generally have more flavor than young ones, and their tough meat is well suited to a slow, tenderizing braise (but keep in mind that larger birds will need more time to cook). Also, a roasting chicken's bigger bones and sinew yield gelatin that will enrich your braising liquid.

Try to buy fresh, locally raised chicken; its flavor can't be beat. If that isn't an option, at least try to avoid commercially raised, previously frozen chicken. It has less flavor, and its texture suffers because freezing dries out the meat.

I like to buy whole birds for fricassées. Not only are they less expensive per pound, but nothing goes to waste. The legs, thighs, and breasts go into the fricassée, and the other parts are saved to make stock. (To learn how to cut up a whole chicken, see Technique Class, p. 20). If you don't want to be troubled with cutting up a whole bird and you have homemade chicken stock on hand, just buy parts.

Chicken stock straight from the can isn't a good idea for fricassées. The sauce made from the gently simmered cooking liquid can only be as good as the stock you started with.

Chicken Fricassées



TO BROWN OR NOT TO BROWN

For most of my fricassées, I brown the chicken before adding the other ingredients. Browning—searing the meat in hot fat—caramelizes the skin and brings out a rich flavor and color. I like to brown in a combination of butter and oil; the butter provides flavor, while the oil lets me cook at higher temperatures without scorching the food.

Some fricassées are best left "white"—that is, the chicken and vegetables are added to the stock without being browned first. The resulting dish is decidedly lighter in flavor and color, but I wouldn't make chicken with dumplings any other way.

After adding the chicken and vegetables to the boiling stock, cover the pan and simmer gently until the chicken is tender. Too much heat will cause the stock to boil, making the chicken dry and tough. Small birds will be done in 20 to 30 minutes; large ones in 40 to 60 minutes. The chicken is cooked when the pieces feel tender and the juices run clear. The breasts are usually done first; remove them from the pan and keep them warm until the other pieces are done.

MAKE A SIMPLE SAUCE FROM THE SIMMERING LIQUID

The final step is making a sauce from the

cooking liquid. First, remove the chicken from the broth and set it aside in a warm place. Then skim the broth to remove excess fat and taste for strength and seasoning. If the liquid tastes weak, let it simmer briefly to concentrate the flavor and then season it with salt and pepper. Remember that salt becomes more concentrated as the liquid reduces, so add it at the end. A splash of lemon juice or vinegar will also boost the flavor.

The simplest method to finish the sauce is to reduce it. For some fricassées, I like a thin sauce, as in the Chicken with Garlic & Olives recipe on p. 50. After removing the chicken from the pan, skim the liquid and then increase the heat to boil the broth gently until it has reduced by about one-third. Return the cooked chicken to the sauce and serve it with plenty of pasta, rice, or good crusty bread for sopping up the sauce.

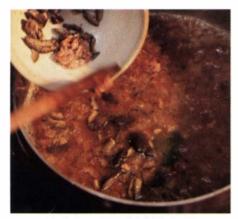
Thicken the sauce with flour and butter. Sometimes, the occasion (or the appetite) demands the rich and silky results that come with a thicker, more elaborate sauce. A great method for making a sauce like this is to use a paste made from equal parts of room-temperature butter and flour, known as beurre manié—literally "rubbed butter." This stuff is terrific for fricassées because you can control the



Olives and garlic make a piquant sauce for a Mediterranean-inspired fricassée. Serve it with plenty of pasta or rice to sop up the savory sauce.



Chicken & Dumplings is a comforting fricassée best served in a bowl. The meat isn't browned so the sauce stays light-colored.



Reduction thickens the sauce. Olives are added at the end of the cooking time so they don't make the sauce too salty.

sauce's thickness by whisking the *beurre manié*, a tablespoon at a time, directly into the simmering liquid. It will begin to thicken the sauce almost immediately.

Egg yolks and cream make a rich, light-colored sauce. A liaison is a mixture of yolks and heavy cream that's whisked into a hot broth at the last minute to make it creamy and smooth. While a liaison won't make the sauce dramatically thicker, it's perfect for light-colored fricassées, like the Chicken & Dumplings recipe included here. Count one yolk and 2 tablespoons cream per cup of cooking liquid. Don't let the sauce boil once you've added the liaison or the yolks will curdle.

MAKE YOUR OWN VARIATIONS

The recipes here include some classic examples of chicken fricassée, but don't be afraid to experiment with your own variations. One of the best things about this dish is that it's forgiving and lets you experiment with impunity.

Coq au Vin

(Chicken with red wine)

Don't spend a fortune on the wine, which flavors and tenderizes the chicken, but do use one you'd happily drink. *Serves four*.

1 Tbs. butter
1 Tbs. canola oil
½ cup diced bacon
2 bone-in chicken breasts and 2 legs
(2 to 2½ lb. total), trimmed of excess fat
⅓ cup brandy
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 bay leaf
⅓ tsp. dried thyme
1 medium tomato, peeled, seeded, and chopped
2 cups dry red wine
2 cups homemade chicken stock
3 cups trimmed, quartered button mushrooms



A paste of butter and flour—beurre manié—is whisked into the simmering stock. This thickens the sauce for a full-flavored Coq au Vin.

1/4 tsp. salt 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper FOR THE BEURRE MANIE:

3 Tbs. butter 3 Tbs. flour

Heat a large saucepan over medium-high heat and add the butter and oil. Add the bacon and sauté until crisp. Remove the bacon with a slotted spoon and set aside. Add the chicken to the hot pan and brown on all sides. Pour off the fat from the pan into a heatproof container and reserve.

Pour the brandy over the chicken in the pan. The brandy should flame; if it doesn't, hold a lit match over the pan. When the flames die out, scrape up the browned bits and add the garlic, bay leaf, thyme, tomato, wine, stock, and bacon. Cover the pot, reduce the heat to medium low, and simmer until the chicken feels firm and its juices run clear when pierced, about 30 min. Remove the chicken from the pan, reserving the cooking liquid.

Meanwhile, in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat, heat the reserved bacon fat. Sauté the mushrooms until lightly browned, about 10 min. Set aside.

Make the *beurre manié*—With a fork or in a food processor, cream the butter. Add the flour to make a smooth paste. Set aside.

Bring the liquid in the pan to a simmer and skim the surface. Continue to simmer until the liquid is reduced by half. Whisk in the beurre manié 1 Tbs. at a time until the liquid is the consistency of light cream (you may not need all the beurre manié). Add the mushrooms and simmer for 5 min. Taste and add salt and pepper if needed. To serve, ladle the sauce over the chicken.

Chicken with Garlic & Olives

I flavor this Mediterranean fricassée with olives, garlic, and anchovies, but you could easily add thyme, saffron, and a little orange zest instead. *Serves four.*



Add the parsley, salt, and pepper. To serve, pour the sauce over the chicken.

Chicken & Dumplings

You can use a food processor to make these dumplings, but be careful not to overmix the dough or the dumplings will be tough. Serves four.

2 bone-in chicken breasts and 2 legs
(2 to 2½ lb. total), trimmed of excess fat
6 cups homemade chicken stock
2 onions, chopped coarse (about 1½ cups)
2 ribs celery, chopped
1 bay leaf
2 cloves garlic, chopped
4 sprigs flat-leaf parsley
1 tsp. salt

FOR THE DUMPLINGS:

6 oz. (1½ cups) all-purpose flour 2 tsp. baking powder ¼ tsp. salt 2 Tbs. butter 2 Tbs. chopped flat-leaf parsley 2 Tbs. snipped chives

1/3 cup milk
FOR THE LIAISON:

2 egg yolks 2 Tbs. heavy cream

Cut each chicken breast crosswise into two pieces and separate the thigh from each leg. You should have eight pieces of similar size.

In a 3-qt. stainless-steel pan, bring the chicken stock to a boil over high heat. Add the chicken, onions, celery, bay leaf, garlic, parsley, and salt and bring to a simmer. Cover the pan, reduce the heat to medium low, and simmer until the chicken feels firm and its juices run clear when pierced, about 30 min.

Remove the chicken from the pan and keep warm. Skim the stock and set it aside to poach the dumplings.

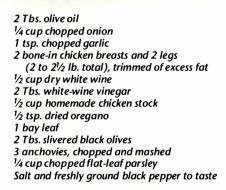
Meanwhile, make the dumplings—In a mixing bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, and salt. With a pastry cutter or two knives, cut the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles cornmeal. Sprinkle in the parsley and chives. In a small bowl, combine the egg and milk; add this to the flour mixture and stir with a fork until the dough just holds together. Do not overmix.

Strain the reserved broth, pressing the liquid from the vegetables, and skim the fat. In a large pot over medium-high heat, bring the defatted broth to a boil. Scoop up a small spoonful of the dumpling dough with a spoon and use another spoon to shape the dumpling into a small oval. Slip the dumpling into the simmering broth. Repeat until the surface of the broth is almost covered with dumplings. Simmer until a toothpick inserted into a dumpling comes out clean, about 10 min. Remove the dumplings from the broth with a slotted spoon. They will have absorbed about half the broth.

Make the liaison—Return the broth to a boil and then turn off the heat. In a small bowl, whisk together the yolks and cream and slowly whisk them into the hot (not boiling) stock. Whisk vigorously to prevent curdling and don't reheat.

To serve, put two pieces of chicken in a large soup plate. Spoon a few dumplings on each plate and ladle the hot sauce over all.

Dennis Baker is the chef/owner at Café des Amis, a bistro in Portland, Oregon. ◆



In a large sauté pan over medium-high heat, heat the olive oil. Add the onion and garlic, cook for 1 min., and then add the chicken. Cook, turning frequently, until the chicken is browned on all sides. Add the wine, vinegar, stock, oregano, and bay leaf. Cover the pan, reduce the heat to medium low, and simmer until the chicken feels firm and its juices run clear when pierced, about 30 min. Remove the chicken from the pan.

Bring the broth to a gentle boil, skim the surface, and cook until the sauce has reduced by one-third. Stir in the olives and anchovies.



A mixture of egg yolks and cream—a liaison—makes a velvety smooth sauce. The liaison should be whisked into hot (but not boiling) stock at the last minute to make the sauce for the Chicken & Dumplings.





A New Twist on Tamales

Extra mixing time is the secret to light, tender tamales

BY STEPHAN PYLES

'm not sure which I love more: eating tamales or making them. These little packages of light cornflour dough embracing a filling of spiced meat, vegetables, or cheese are among my favorite foods. The dough is fluffy, tender, and sweet with the flavor of corn, and the savory filling punctuates each bite.

Traditionally wrapped, steamed, and served in rehydrated cornhusks, tamales resemble party favors. The look is appropriate because tamales, which are from Mexico, are often part of a celebration. The preparation of tamales is almost as important as the event itself, a tradition that has crossed the border from Mexico to Texas, where I live. At Christmas, it's common to find friends and family crammed into the kitchen, gossiping and turning out tamales assembly-line style.

THE KEY INGREDIENTS FOR THE DOUGH ARE MASA HARINA AND AIR

In Mexico, tamale dough begins with fresh masa, which is made from dried corn kernels that are cooked and soaked in limewater (water mixed with calcium oxide) and then ground into a paste. Because fresh masa is almost impossible to find in most parts of this country, I use the more readily available masa harina, a corn flour made from dried masa. You can find masa harina in some supermarkets and most Mexican groceries. You can also order it by mail from Pendry's Chile Supply in Fort Worth, Texas (800/533-1870) or The CMC Company in Avalon, New Jersey (800/262-2780).

To make the dough for tamales, I beat masa harina with water and a solid fat, such as lard or vegetable shortening. In Mexico, good-quality, flavorful lard is traditional. Some people use butter, but I prefer a good vegetable shortening. Its quality is more consistent than that of commercially



Air is a key ingredient for a light dough. Don't give the mixing time short shrift or you'll end up with leaden tamales.

prepared lard, and it gives the dough a better texture than butter does.

Air is the most important ingredient for keeping tamales light. An airy dough produces fluffy tamales, so I beat the *masa* and shortening in a mixer at high speed for about 20 minutes. This traps air in the dough, which forces the tamales to expand as they steam, making them light and tender.

ADD FLAVOR BY WAY OF THE DOUGH, THE FILLING, OR A SAUCE

Tamale dough takes well to flavoring. I like to mix in a purée of sweet potatoes, corn, or pumpkin for an especially intense flavor. Fresh herbs, such as oregano, cilantro, basil, and marjoram, add complexity when puréed with a little olive oil and mixed directly into the dough.

Cornhusk ties are strong and pretty.
You can use string to tie your tamales, but strands of cornhusk look more rustic.
To make ties, just pull down on the husk, following its natural ridges.

aren't big enough,

make a wider one.

overlap two husks to



ico has its own variety of tamale, and the diversity is staggering. The tamale fillings I like include chicken, venison, beef, black beans, sweet potatoes, cheese, and sautéed, grilled, or smoked vegetables. Leftovers of stews, meat, or vegetable dishes also make excellent fillings.

A good tamale should be able to stand on its own.

A good tamale should be able to stand on its own, but salsas are an nice accompaniment, as are sauces made with reduced cream and chicken stock.

Filling possibilities are

endless. Each region of Mex-

CORNHUSK WRAPPERS ADD A LITTLE FLAVOR

A tamale isn't a tamale until the doughand the filling are wrapped and steamed. Rehydrated cornhusks are the traditional wrapping for tamales in most of Mexico. (In some regions, tamales are wrapped in banana leaves.) Dried cornhusks are available in many supermarket produce sections, but you can also order them by mail from the sources on p. 53.

If you can't find cornhusks, wrap your tamales in aluminum foil, kitchen parchment, or plastic wrap, but tamales wrapped this way lose a little of their history and their charm—and they won't have that bit of savory corn flavor that cornhusks can lend.

Bigger husks make better wrappers. When you open a package of dried cornhusks, sort through them. Some may have torn or may be too small to use. The best husks have even coloring, no holes, and are 5 to 6 inches across and 7 to 8 inches long. You can overlap two smaller husks to make a wider one.

Use any extra husks to make ties. Cornhusks are surprisingly strong, and you can use strips of them like string to tie the tamales. Hold a soaked husk in one hand with the husk's ridges running vertically and tear a single ridge downward with your other hand to get a thin, string-like length.

WRAPPING AND STEAMING TAMALES

There's a knack to wrapping tamales, but even ones that look less than perfect still taste delicious.

Soak the husks. To make the dried husks pliable, put them in a large bowl, weight them with a plate so they'll stay submerged, and cover them with warm water. Let the husks rehydrate at room temperature for about 30 minutes. You can do this step as far in advance as you like; at my restaurant, we always have husks soaking in the refrigerator. Briefly drain the soaked husks on paper towels before you use them.

Fill the husks. It may take several tries to figure out just how much dough and filling your husks can

Wrapping tamales





With a spoon or your fingers, smear a thin coating of the dough over the broadest portion of the husk, leaving about 1½ inches of space between the dough and the long sides of the husk. (For a husk that's about 5x8 inches, use about ¼ cup of the dough).

2 spread about 2 tablespoons of the filling in a thin strip down the length of the dough.



hold. Generally, to fill a 5x8-inch husk, you'll need ½ cup dough and 2 tablespoons filling. After you wrap a few, you'll be able to judge just how much of each is needed.

Tie up the tamales. There are many different ways to assemble tamales. The method shown in the photos below is a common one and easy for a beginner to master. Alternatively, you can wrap the tamale around the dough and filling, gently pinch where the dough ends, twist, and tie both ends with string so the tamale looks like a party favor. The method below, with only one tie, is a little easier to do.

However you fold your tamales, don't fold or tie them too tight. Tamales expand when steamed, and if the husk is too tight, the *masa* will burst through the husk. But don't fold or tie them too loose, either. Cornhusks make an airtight wrapper if they're folded properly. A too-loose tamale not only looks limp, but it can also allow steam to reach the dough, which can make the tamale soggy.

Stack your tamales upright in a steamer. Almost any steamer will do. I like stainless-steel or aluminum compartmental steamers and Chinese bamboo steamers, but I also use a simple vegetable steamer and have even improvised using a large pot and a strainer. The important thing is to be sure that little or no steam escapes during the process; this helps ensure that the tamales will be tender, not leaden. If the steamer doesn't have a tight-fitting lid, fit aluminum foil snugly over the pot's surface.

For best results, the tamales should not be packed too tightly in the steamer to allow some room for them to expand. Steaming times can vary, but start with half an hour for six to ten tamales. They're



done when you gently press the tamale and feel that the dough has separated from the husk.

TO SERVE, USE A KNIFE AND FORK—OR JUST TWO HANDS

When it comes to eating tamales, let the setting determine how. If you've sauced the tamale and there's good silverware and unstained place mats, treat it like a baked potato, using a knife and fork; just don't eat the husk. If you're serving sauce on the side and it's a plastic-fork affair, all bets are off. Unwrap the

Stand tamales upright for steaming. You can tell these spicy beef tamales are done because the masa has separated from the husk.

of the husk firmly over the dough, pushing the dough up to enclose the filling.
Overlap the sides of the husk a little, so the dough is completely enclosed in the husk.



Fold the narrow, tapered end of the husk over the lengthwise fold, and then fold the broader end up to overlap the tapered end.

With a piece of string or a strip of cornhusk, firmly tie the tamale closed around the overlapping ends.



bundle and eat it with a fork or your hands—whichever gets it to your mouth more quickly.

Basic Tamale Dough

The key to making a light tamale dough is to incorporate as much air into it as possible, so don't skimp on the mixing times. *Yields enough dough for eight tamales*.

1¾ cups (7 oz.) masa harina (see sources on p. 53) 1¼ cups very hot water ½ cup plus 2 Tbs. cold vegetable shortening or lard ¼ cup chilled homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock 1½ tsp. salt 1 tsp. baking powder

With an electric mixer fitted with the whisk or paddle attachment, beat the *masa harina* on low speed, slowly adding the hot water in a constant stream to make a dough that's wet but not sticky. Increase the speed to high and continue mixing for 5 min. Remove the dough from the bowl; it should be firm and no longer wet. Wrap the dough in plastic and refrigerate for 30 min.

Return the dough to the mixer and, with the mixer on high speed, slowly add the shortening 1 Tbs. at a time. Scrape the sides of the bowl as needed. Continue beating until the dough is smooth and light, about 10 min. total; reduce the speed to low and continue beating.

In a small bowl, whisk together the chicken stock, salt, and baking powder. Slowly drizzle this mixture into the dough. Combine thoroughly, and then increase the speed to high; continue beating the dough until it's light and fluffy, about 5 min.

Sweet-Potato Filling

This recipe calls for pure chile powder—a mix of dried ground chiles. Most commercial brands contain salt and other fillers but are suitable if pure chile powder is unavailable. *Yields eight tamales*.



Eating with your hands is perfectly acceptable at an informal tamale party. This sweet-potato tamale is firm enough to eat without a fork—as long as plenty of napkins are nearby.

1 sweet potato (about 12 oz.), baked, cooled, and peeled 1 Tbs. maple syrup ½ tsp. cayenne ½ tsp. pure chile powder ½ tsp. salt 1 recipe Basic Tamale Dough (recipe at left) 1 poblano chile, roasted, peeled, and chopped, or 1 can

In a small mixing bowl, mash the sweet potato with the maple syrup, cayenne, chile powder, and salt with a fork until it's a rough purée. Add half of this mixture to the tamale dough to flavor the dough. Combine the remaining mashed sweet potato with the roasted, chopped poblano to make the filling. Assemble and cook the tamales following the directions on p. 54.

Fresh Corn & Cheese Filling

(4 oz.) chopped green chiles, drained

In this recipe, the tamale dough gets a little heat from the addition of cayenne and cumin. Yields eight tamales.

1 cup fresh or thawed frozen corn kernels
1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese or a Mexican cheese such as queso fresco or queso blanco
1 jalapeño, seeded and chopped fine
1 clove garlic, chopped fine
14 tsp. salt
1 recipe Basic Tamale Dough (recipe at left) made with
14 tsp. cayenne and 14 tsp. ground cumin added to the chicken-stock mixture

In a medium bowl, combine the corn, cheese, jalapeño, garlic, and salt. Assemble and cook the tamales using the tamale dough and following the directions on p. 54.

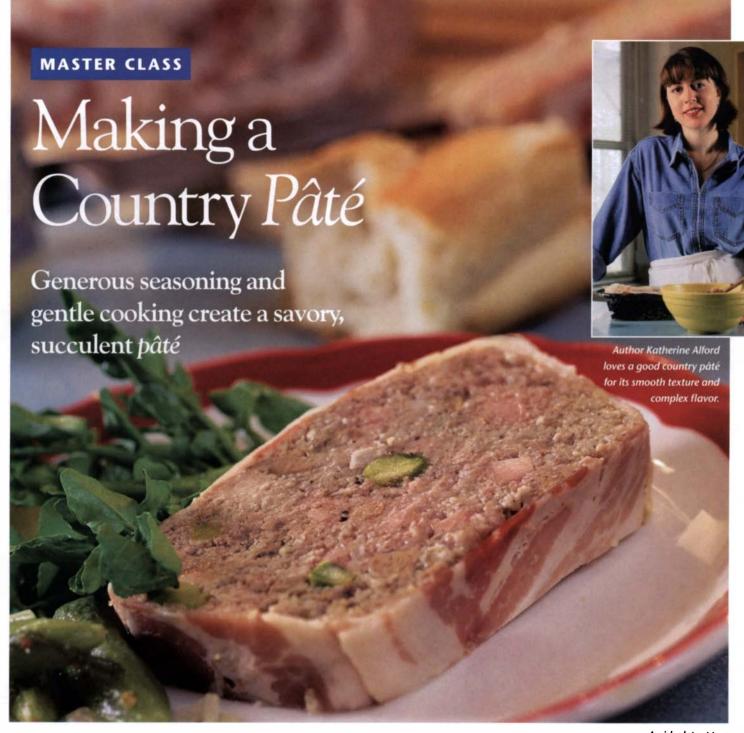
Spicy Beef Filling

You can substitute cooked and shredded chicken or pork for the beef. Yields eight tamales.

2 tsp. olive oil
4 cup diced onion
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 lb. ground beef
1 cup diced tomato
4 cup diced red bell pepper
2 jalapeños, seeded and diced
1/4 tsp. ground cumin
1/4 tsp. cayenne
1 tsp. salt; more to taste
1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more to taste
1/4 cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock
1/4 cup red wine
1 recipe Basic Tamale Dough (recipe at left)

In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic; cook until translucent. Add the beef and cook, stirring often, until the meat is no longer pink, about 5 min. Stir in the tomato, red pepper, jalapeños, cumin, cayenne, salt, and pepper, and cook about 2 min. Add the stock and wine, bring to a simmer, and cook until most of the liquid has evaporated, about 15 min. Remove from the heat and let cool to room temperature. Taste and add more salt and pepper if needed; set aside. Assemble and cook the tamales using the tamale dough and following the directions on p. 54.

Stephan Pyles is the chef/owner of the award-winning Star Canyon restaurant in Dallas. He's the author of The New Texas Cuisine (Doubleday, 1993) and a forthcoming book on tamales (MacMillan, 1997).



BY KATHERINE ALFORD

hen I had my first taste of rich, moist country pâté, I immediately classified it as a luxury food. The sumptuous texture and complex flavor told me that this stuff must be expensive to buy and difficult to make. I was right on the first score but decidedly wrong on the second.

Years later I learned that, in spite of its elegant name, pâté is really just well-bred meatloaf—a simple mixture of seasoned ground meat gently

baked in a terrine mold. (Although the terms *pâté* and terrine once had distinct definitions, they're now both used to refer to this kind of dish.)

When I learned that pâté is actually better when made a few days in advance, I was completely converted. It now shows up frequently on my table as an elegant first course or as a simple supper with earthy lentils and a green salad. Crusty bread is a must, as is a good Dijon mustard.

THE MEAT OF THE MATTER

The character of a pâté depends on the type of meat that's used and the way it's ground or chopped into

An ideal start to a meal: a slice of country pâté served with a crusty baguette, strong Dijon mustard, and vinegary cornichons.

Mix and season the meat well for a flavorful pâté



Cooked onions and wine contribute a sweet note. In a small skillet over moderate heat, sauté the onions or shallots in 2 tablespoons butter until sweet, 10 to 15 minutes. Add the white wine and simmer until the wine has reduced by about two-thirds. Transfer the onions to a large mixing bowl and set aside to cool.



Chicken livers add richness. Heat 1 tablespoon butter in a skillet over medium heat. Season the livers with salt and pepper; sauté until medium rare, about 3 minutes on each side. Let cool and chop into ½-inch pieces; reserve any juices. Set aside.



Fat back keeps the pâté moist. Chop the fat back into small chunks and then whip it in a food processor until creamy and smooth, or mince it fine with a sharp knife.

what is known as *forcemeat*. Pork is commonly used as a base for *pâtés* because it is tender and has a mild flavor. I like to add veal for delicacy and chicken livers to enhance the smooth texture and rich taste. While purists may swear that the most succulent *pâtés* are made from meats chopped by hand, I buy lean ground pork and veal from the supermarket and have been quite pleased with the results.

If you get hooked on making your own pâtés,

you may want to try chopping the meat by hand for the added control it gives you over the texture, but for most cooks it's impractical. If you do chop the meat yourself, first trim away any fat or connective tissue.

Fat keeps the pâté moist.

Adding fat to the forcemeat makes the pâté smooth and moist. Some recipes rely on a majority of fat, and others use equal parts fat to lean, but I've found that one-third fat in proportion to lean makes a smooth-textured, rich pâté that isn't at all greasy. Anything less than one-third fat will make an overly lean pâté that is mealy, dry, and crumbles when sliced.

The best fat to use is dense fat back (the pure white pork fat without any streaks of meat). It may be difficult to find at the grocery store, but fat back

should be available at any good butcher shop. Whip the fat in a food processor until it's creamy before adding it to the ground pork and veal. You can also mince it by hand, but your *pâté* won't be as smooth.

Egg and flour hold the forcemeat together. A well-crafted pâté is dense and moist enough that it can be cut into ½-inch slices that don't fall apart. While the natural gelatin of the ground veal helps,

the addition of a little egg and flour ensures that the forcemeat holds together.

SEASON IT WELL

Seasoning a *pâté* to your own taste is one of the rewards of a homemade terrine. With just a slight change in the flavor-

ings—adding pungent juniper berries or a rich Madeira—a basic meat mixture can take on a very different personality. The key to seasoning a pâté is to remember that no one flavor should dominate, but that the flavors should blend for a well-balanced, vivid taste.

A typical seasoning used in terrines is a spice blend known as *quatre épices*—four spices—generally composed of pepper, nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon, or ginger. Individual recipes, however, reflect the cook's palate. For example, I don't care for the strong

58 FINE COOKING

Let the *pâté* sit overnight

so the flavors

blend and mellow.



Flour and an egg bind it all together. Add the pork, veal, chopped fat back, egg, and flour to the sautéed onions.



Stir well for a smooth-textured pâté. Mix everything together with a wooden spoon until thoroughly combined.



Season well. Add the cognac, ham, pistachios, spice mix, and chopped chicken livers with their juices.

taste of cloves and prefer to substitute the rounded flavor of allspice. It's best to make your own mix by grinding whole spices to a fine powder in a spice mill rather than to use lackluster, commercially ground spices. Ginger is an exception: use dried ground ginger in this recipe. Fresh ginger would overpower the other spices.

Slowly cooked onions or shallots are standard, as is a shot of cognac, Madeira, or sherry, which brings a distinctive edge to the taste of the *pâté*. Dried herbs, such as sage, thyme, savory, and bay leaf, can complement the sweet taste of pork. For an intense, earthy taste, add minced dried porcini or morels; for an unforgettable *pâté*, finish it off with black truffles.

Salt is essential to a well-seasoned pâté. Pâtés are served cold (or allowed to come up to room temperature), and a basic tenet of seasoning is that cold temperatures mute flavors; therefore, cold foods require more salt than hot foods. Two to three teaspoons kosher salt for 1½ pounds meat should be enough to make a full-flavored terrine.

Before assembling your terrine, check the seasoning. Make a small patty of the seasoned forcemeat and gently sauté it in a little butter. Let the patty cool and then taste it—it should be quite full flavored at this point. Don't worry if it seems too strong: the seasonings will mellow as the pâté bakes and later as it rests.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Although there are special terrine pans specifically designed for making *pâtés*, you can use nearly any heavy pan and cover it with aluminum foil. See the sidebar on p. 60 for pan options.

Line the pan with an insulating layer of fat to keep the pâté from drying as it bakes. Traditionally, terrines are lined with thin sheets of pork fat back, which baste the meat as it cooks. Slicing large sheets of pork fat by hand is very difficult, so ask your butcher to do it for you. Alternatively, use thin slices of bacon or pancetta, as we do here. Since American bacon is smoked, it's essential to blanch it before lining the mold, or its flavor will completely overwhelm the pâté. When using pork fat or bacon, I prefer to remove the lining strips before serving. Pancetta isn't smoked and is leaner than bacon, so it doesn't need to be blanched or removed before serving. It's a bit more expensive, but it contributes a dimension of flavor as well as a distinctive swirl pattern on the outside of the terrine.

CREATE A COLORFUL SLICE

I like to enhance the texture and flavor of a country pâté with crunchy nuts or bits of diced meats, such as ham or chicken livers. Adding these to the forcemeat (as we do here) gives an attractive mosaic look to the sliced pâté. Strips of ham or whole sautéed chicken livers can also be arranged

Test for taste



Test the seasoning before you bake the pâté. Make a small patty of the meat mixture and fry it gently; let it cool and then taste it. Adjust the seasoning of the forcemeat if necessary.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996 59

Line the mold to keep the pâté moist



Line the mold with overlapping slices of pancetta. Allow the excess to hang over the sides of the pan.



Gently press the forcemeat into the terrine mold to eliminate any air pockets. Fold the overhanging strips of pancetta over the top of the meat.



Bake slowly and gently. Seal with foil or a lid and set the terrine in a roasting pan. Fill the pan with enough hot water to come halfway up the sides of the terrine. Bake in a 350°F oven until the internal temperature reaches 160°F, about 1 hour and 50 minutes. Remove from the oven and let the pâté cool to room temperature in the water bath.

in the middle of the terrine for a more dramatic decorative pattern.

COVER THE TERRINE AND BAKE IT GENTLY

High heat and quick cooking will cause the *pâté* to shrink and dry out. Moderate the heat by covering the terrine with foil or a tight-fitting lid and baking it in a water bath. Even with the oven at 350°F, the water bath ensures that the temperature surrounding the terrine never rises above 212°F. At this moderate temperature, the *pâté* will take close to two hours to cook. When done, the meat will be floating in its rendered juices. Remove the terrine from the oven and let it cool to room temperature in the water bath before pouring off the excess liquid.

Weight the terrine to enhance the texture and flavor. When the pâté has cooled, set up a makeshift press to compact the meat and give the terrine a dense texture. Under this weight, the pâté should rest in the refrigerator for at least 24 hours and up to three days—a step known as ripening. As it rests, a fantastic transformation of flavor takes place, and the terrine emerges richer and more complex than when it first came out of the oven.

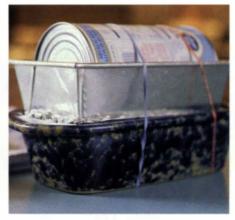
Before serving, slide the pâté from the mold and let it come to room temperature. If the cold pâté is reluctant to come out of the pan, simply warm the outside in water. Remove the bacon strips or fat back or, if you used pancetta, just run the terrine under warm water to rinse off any excess fat. If you're not serving the pâté right away, wrap it well and refrigerate it for five or six days. I don't recommend freezing pâté, as it gets waterlogged when defrosted.

Choose any heavy pan



You don't need to spend a fortune on a special terrine dish (the white covered pan above). Any heavy pan that conducts heat slowly, such as one made from ceramic, enamel, earthenware, or glass, will create a moist pâté. Avoid metal pans, as they'll conduct the heat too aggressively. The container doesn't even need to be a loaf shape. I think there's something charming about a homey, round pâté.

Press the terrine to give it a dense texture



Weight the terrine to firm the texture. When the pâté is cool, pour off any excess juices. Fit a clean pan on top of the pâté and fill it with 1 to 2 pounds of cans. Secure the cans with thick rubber bands or masking tape and refrigerate for at least 24 hours.



The pâté should slide easily from the mold. If not, run a knife around the edge to loosen it, or warm the pan briefly in water.



Rinse the pâté quickly to remove any congealed juices. Dry it with paper towels. Bacon or strips of fat back, if used, should be removed.

Country Pâté with Pistachios

Yields one 8-inch loaf or 6-inch round.

1 cup minced onions or shallots

3 Tbs. unsalted butter ½ cup dry white wine

1/4 lb. chicken livers, trimmed of any visible fat Salt and freshly ground black pepper

½ lb. fat back

1/2 lb. ground pork

½ lb. ground veal

1 large egg

2 Tbs. flour

3 Tbs. cognac or brandy

½ cup diced ham

 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup skinned pistachio nuts

FOR THE SPICE MIX:

2 tsp. kosher salt

1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1/2 tsp. freshly ground allspice

1/2 tsp. freshly ground coriander

1/4 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg

1/2 tsp. dried ground ginger

TO LINE THE TERRINE:

3/4 lb. pancetta, blanched bacon, or fat back, sliced thin

For the procedure, follow the photos starting on p. 58.

VARIATION

For a variation of taste and texture, omit the pistachios, substitute the following herbs and spices, and purée the raw chicken livers and add them to the forcemeat.

2 tsp. kosher salt

1 tsp. dried thyme

1 tsp. dried savory

1/2 tsp. dried sage

1 bay leaf

1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1/4 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg

Grind the herbs and spices together and add them to the forcemeat.

A well-chilled *pâté* is easiest to slice



Pâté tastes best when served at room temperature. Cut the cold pâté into ½-inch slices and let them sit for about 30 minutes to let the full flavor develop.

Katherine Alford learned to make pâté in France. Now the mere taste of a good one transports her from her life as a food teacher and writer in New York City back to Paris' Left Bank.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996 61

Photoe: Susan V.

Kitchen Scales for the Savvy Cook

Measuring by weight rather than by volume can make you a better baker

BY MAGGIE GLEZER

s a former cups-and-tablespoons-only baker, I understand the aversion many cooks have to using a kitchen scale. After all, most of us learned to bake with measuring cups and spoons. Our only exposure to a scale was probably in high school chemistry—not the friendliest of introductions. But after years of puzzling and inconsistent results, I finally realized that weighing dry ingredients is the best way to know exactly what's in my mixing bowl.

Weighing ingredients is efficient and accurate. Depending on whether it has been sifted, tapped down, or compacted, a cup of flour can vary in weight by two ounces or more—a substantial difference, especially when you're baking. Instead of fiddling with cups and careful, repeated scoopings and sweepings, weighing allows bakers to measure precisely, right into the mixing bowl. Cleanup is easier too: no swept-off ingredients to wipe up, no cups to wash.

CHOOSE A SPRING OR ELECTRONIC SCALE

Two types of scale are available to home cooks: spring and electronic. (Unfortunately, affordable balance scales, possibly the most accurate and surely the most durable, are extremely difficult to find.)



Get a good read. Look for a scale with easy-to-read metric and U.S. system markings.



A scale with a large weighing base will allow you to weigh ingredients in your largest mixing bowl.



Five quarters equal

1 ounce. Use them

to check a scale's

accuracy before you

buy and to calibrate

your scale at home.



Spring scales use an old and inexpensive technology: a spring. Because of the way a spring works and the restricted space on the weight dial, spring scales either have fine graduations of measurement or a large capacity, but usually not both. Though spring scales aren't as sensitive or as accurate as electronic scales, a good one works fine for home bakers.

Electronic scales use a much newer, more sensitive, more accurate, and more expensive technology: assessing weight by electronic current. An LED readout displays the weight, so these scales can offer both

a large capacity and fine graduations. But because electronic scales are relatively delicate and easily damaged, they may not be lasting investments.



Before you buy a scale, look at a floor model or ask a store clerk to unwrap one so you can consider it close up.

◆ Look for a large-capacity scale with a wide weighing base. Instead of using the usually tiny bowl that comes with the scale, I find it more convenient to measure dry ingredients into a mixing bowl. With a large-capacity scale, I can use my biggest, heaviest mixing bowl and weigh accurately even when doubling or tripling a recipe. A wide weighing base accommodates a range of bowl sizes. Too small a base may cause a bowl to topple. Look for a capacity of at least 4 pounds or 2,000 grams.



Taring—**setting the scale to zero**—**ensures accuracy** by subtracting the weight of your container and any previously weighed ingredients.



Weigh all your dry ingredients right into your mixing bowl; there will be less to clean up.

- ◆ Be sure that the scale is easy to tare—that is, set to zero. This feature is standard on all electronic scales, but some spring scales have tare features that are awkwardly placed or difficult to use.
- ◆ Check for fine graduations to ensure accuracy. If your scale measures in large increments (1 ounce, for example), the weight of your ingredients may be off enough to ruin your bread or cake. Look for ⅓-ounce or 10-gram graduations in spring scales; ⅓-ounce or 2-gram graduations in electronic scales.
- ◆ Look for legible dials. Electronic scales all have easy-to-read LED dis-

plays, but spring scales often have cramped dials with minute spaces between graduations. Be sure your spring scale has graduations that are large enough to read easily.

- ◆ Find a scale with both metric and U.S. systems. Although this country is stuck on U.S. measurements, metric really is easier, especially if you like to use foreign cookbooks or formulate recipes yourself. A scale that's convertible won't become outmoded.
- ◆ Don't pay too much. Price doesn't always indicate quality. You can get a good spring scale for around \$20. One of the better electronic scales costs less than \$45, even though some are \$100 and more.

TEST FOR ACCURACY BEFORE YOU BUY

Domestic-use scales are not held to any U.S. government standards, so you'll want to verify the accuracy of a scale before you buy one. A simple test is to weigh five quarters: the scale should read 1 ounce.

USING A SCALE IS SIMPLE

Set a bowl on the weighing base. If the scale is electronic, turn it on now: it should read zero. If the scale is a spring-type, you'll have to tare the dial (set it to zero) usually with a thumbscrew or a knob, so the weight of the bowl isn't measured. Pour in your first dry ingredient, adding to or subtracting from the amount in the bowl until the scale reads the desired weight. Tare the scale to read zero again, and then add the next dry ingredient, in its own distinct heap to allow for easier adjustments. Continue to weigh and tare until all the dry ingredients have been added.

Maggie Glezer teaches and writes about breadmaking in Atlanta. ◆







Phố is made to order.
The separate elements
of the soup are
combined just before
serving, and the
soup is garnished
at the table to suit
individual tastes.

Vietnam's Classic Soup

Phō combines an aromatic beef broth with tender noodles, crisp sprouts, hot chiles, and a cool squeeze of lime

BY NGUYEN THI THAI MORELAND

first ate *phō* when I was a child in Vietnam. This soup of fragrant, spicy beef broth, tangled rice noodles, and thin slices of steak is street food there, sold by vendors who simmer huge pots of the broth over small wood fires. The aroma draws crowds all day long. Though it has been many years since I bought *phō* from a Saigon street vendor's stall, I still eat it often from a recipe I make at home.

Phō (pronounced FUH with a rising intonation) is one of those rare dishes that manages to be hearty and comforting yet refreshing and light. This richly flavored soup is a filling one, yet the seasonings and garnishes lend it an exotic taste.

THE BROTH MAKES THE SOUP

Great phō needs a great broth. It should have a beefy flavor and complex spiciness, but it should never taste greasy or salty. The broth is made with oxtails, an inexpensive and often overlooked cut of beef. Oxtails make a rich, full-bodied stock, and their meat is meltingly tender. You can also use other lean, flavor-



A variety of spices makes phö distinctive. Toast the cloves, star anise, and cinnamon stick and tie them together with the fennel seeds in a cheesecloth bundle.



Oxtails are the best choice for a rich, clear broth. After simmering them for two hours, remove the oxtails and pull the meat from the bones. Return the bones to the stock and set the meat aside to serve in the finished soup.

Is a Whole Meal in a Bowl

ful beef bones, such as neck and shin bones. Stay away from marrow bones; they contain a lot of fat.

A mixture of spices and seasonings gives the broth its characteristic fragrance: charred ginger and onion, cloves, cinnamon, bay leaves, fennel seeds, and star anise, a star-shaped spice harvested from a small evergreen tree native to China.

PREPARE THE GARNISH AS THE BROTH SIMMERS

The meat and vegetables that garnish *phō* don't need much preparation. Rice noodles must be soaked and briefly boiled; scallions, chiles, basil, onion, and cilantro only need to be chopped. To ensure that the steak will be tender and cook quickly from just the heat of the broth, it must be sliced quite thin. Putting the steak in the freezer for an hour before you cut it will firm the meat so that thin slices can be easily cut with a sharp knife.



Phō is a family tradition. Author Thai Moreland and daughter Kim make this fragrant Vietnamese soup at home.

Slice the beef thin enough so it will cook when hot broth is ladled over it. To make it easier to slice. put the meat in the freezer for an hour. Be sure to slice across the arain to keep the meat tender.



The broth for pho freezes well, so don't hesitate to make the full amount. Put the cooked oxtail meat in the container with the stock and freeze them together.

Phõ

(Vietnamese Beef & Rice-Noodle Soup) You'll need a fork or chopsticks in addition to a spoon to get every bite. Yields 16 cups of broth; serves six as a main course.

FOR THE BROTH:

4 lb. oxtails, cut into 11/2- to 2-inch pieces and trimmed of fat

3-inch piece ginger, unpeeled 1 large onion, halved and unpeeled 1/3 cup fish sauce

8 whole star anise

5 whole cloves

3-inch cinnamon stick

1 tsp. fennel seeds

3 bay leaves

Drink Choices For pho's spiciness, beer is best

There's so much going on in a bowl of pho that your beverage choices are quite flexible. And although dry Rieslings, dry rosés, and some light red wines can work, beer works betterespecially if you've been liberal with the hot chile.

All six Asian beers we tried—Tsingtao from China; Singha from Thailand; Sapporo and Kirin Ichiban from Japan; Taj Mahal from India; and Saigon from Vietnam-were light, clean, and refreshing with a mildly bitter edge and short finish that kept bringing us back for more pho. The Taj Mahal's unusual smoky flavor and the Saigon's exotic spiciness took some getting used to, but they both worked well. Tsingtao gets top votes for its balance and malty fullness.

-Rosina Tinari Wilson is a food and wine writer and teacher. She's a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.



Once cooked, the rice noodles are drained and divided amona the bowls. Heating the bowls helps keep the soup hot.

FOR THE GARNISH:

1 lb. 1/4-inch rice noodles

3/4 lb. flank, sirloin, or filet steak, trimmed of fat and sliced thin 2 bunches scallions, sliced thin

½ cup tightly packed fresh cilantro leaves, chopped rough

½ cup tightly packed fresh basil leaves, chopped rough 1 cup thinly sliced mild, sweet white onion

1½ cups bean sprouts

3 large limes, cut into wedges and seeds removed 6 scallions, white part only

Red chile paste or sliced fresh hot chiles (optional)

Rub the oxtails generously with salt and rinse well under running water; this helps make a clearer broth. Put the oxtails in a large stockpot and add enough water to cover the bones by 4 inches (about 2 gallons). Bring to a full boil and then lower the heat to a rapid simmer. Skim the scum that rises to the surface.

Meanwhile, put the ginger and onion halves on a baking sheet and char them under the broiler (or on the burner of a gas stove) until lightly blackened, 10 to 15 min. Turn them over halfway through cooking. When cool enough to handle, rinse the onion and ginger under running water, using a knife to scrape away some of the charred surface. Cut the ginger into three pieces and toss it and the onion halves into the simmering broth, along with 1 Tbs. salt and the fish sauce.

Put the star anise, cloves, and cinnamon stick in a small skillet and toast them on top of a stove burner over medium heat. Turn the spices a couple of times until they're slightly darkened (3 to 4 min.) and you smell their aroma. Put the toasted spices and fennel seeds



Arrange the thin slices of raw beef and pieces of cooked oxtail meat over the noodles. Let the slices overlap only slightly or they won't cook when the hot broth is poured over them.

in a small square of double-thick cheesecloth and tie the bundle with a long piece of kitchen twine. Add the spice bundle and the bay leaves to the broth, tying the end of the twine to the pot handle for easy retrieval.

Let the broth simmer, uncovered, skimming occasionally. After 2 hours, remove the spice bundle, onion, and ginger from the pot and discard. Remove the oxtails from the pot and set aside. (Let the broth continue to simmer). When cool enough to handle, pull the meat from the bones. Set the meat aside and return the bones to the broth. Continue simmering, uncovered, until the broth is rich and flavorful, about 1 hour. Taste the broth and add more salt or fish sauce as needed.

Meanwhile, soak the rice noodles in cold water for at least 20 min. Arrange the sliced scallions, cilantro, basil, sliced onion, bean sprouts, lime wedges, and chiles on a platter in separate piles.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add the drained rice noodles. Give the noodles a quick stir and cook until tender but firm, about 1 min. Rice noodles can quickly become gummy, so don't let them overcook. Drain the noodles. Warm six large bowls by rinsing them with hot water and divide the noodles among the bowls.

Just before serving, return the broth to a full boil. Blanch the six scallion whites in the broth for 2 min. Add one scallion to each bowl. Arrange the slices of raw beef and pieces of cooked oxtail meat over the noodles in each bowl. Add a handful of the sliced scallions, basil, cilantro, and onion. Carefully ladle the boiling broth over all; the raw beef should be submerged in the broth. Serve immediately, along with the platter of garnishes.

SOURCES FOR ASIAN INGREDIENTS

Ingredients such as fish sauce, red chile paste, rice noodles, and star anise can be found in the Asian foods section of some grocery stores, or look for Asian grocers in your telephone directory. Ingredients can be ordered from the following sources.

Anzen Importers, 736 NE Martin Luther King Blvd., Portland, OR 97232; 503/233-5111.

Haig's Delicacies, 642 Clement St., San Francisco, CA 94118; 415/752-6283.

K. Kalustyan, 123 Lexington Ave., New York, New York 10016; 212/685-3451. Oriental Food Market & Cooking School, 2801 West Howard St., Chicago, IL 60645; 312/274-2826.

The Oriental Pantry, 423 Great Rd., Acton, MA 01720; 508/264-4576 or 800/828-0368.

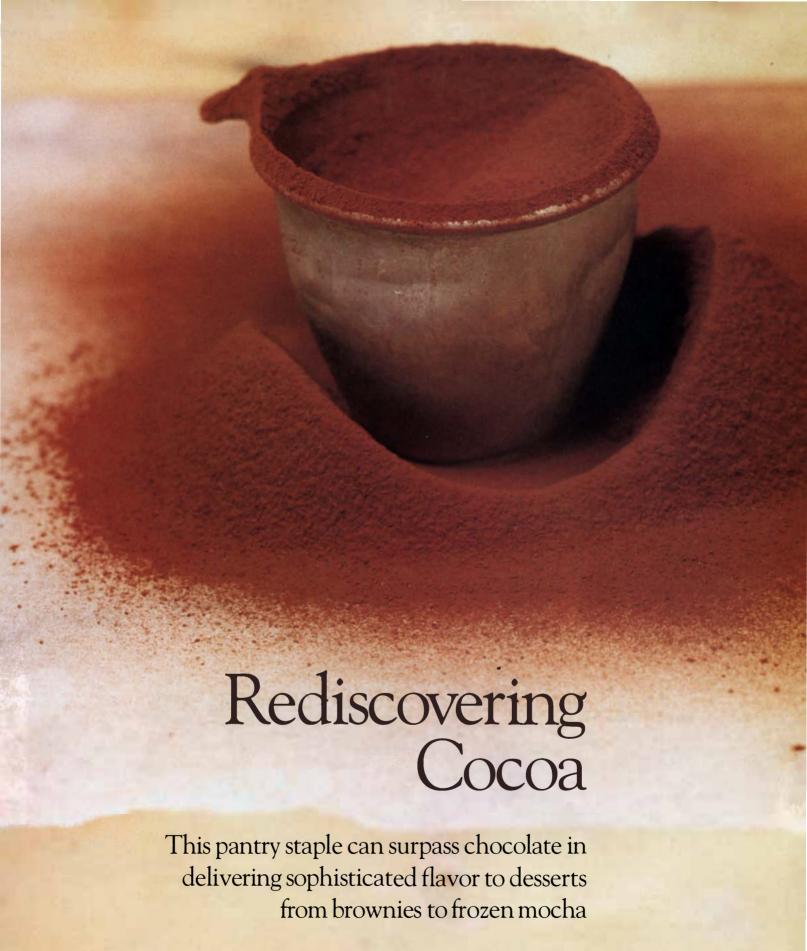
Spice Merchant, PO Box 524, Jackson Hole, WY 83001; 307/733-7811 or 800/551-5999.

Thai Moreland was born and raised in Vietnam. She's the owner of the Dragon Lady Valet, a drycleaning store, and Dragon Lady Nails, both in midtown Manhattan.



The heat of the boiling broth cooks the thin slices of beef. All the flavors come together as the soup is ready to eat.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996 67



BY ALICE MEDRICH

o make the most chocolatey hot fudge sauce, gooey brownies, and chewy cookies, most cooks today reach for the best chocolate they can find. But in fact, cocoa often surpasses chocolate in producing superb texture and intense chocolate taste. Long considered a prosaic pantry staple, cocoa is actually a marvelous and versatile ingredient.

Because it requires no chopping or melting, cocoa is easy and convenient to use. But convenience is only one of cocoa's virtues. Cocoa is chocolate with most of the cocoa butter removed, which means it delivers a very concentrated chocolate flavor. And

because not all baked goods benefit from the heavy texture of cocoa butter, cooks who use cocoa can combine it with the right amount and type of fat to make crisper cookies or more tender cakes.

COCOA AND CHOCOLATE COME FROM THE SAME BEAN

Like chocolate, cocoa is made from cocoa beans that are fermented, dried, roasted, and ground to a paste known as chocolate liquor. About half of this paste is cocoa butter. Using a hydraulic press, producers remove 50% to 75% of the cocoa butter from the chocolate liquor and pulverize the remaining solidified liquor to make cocoa.

Although most of cocoa's flavor doesn't come from cocoa butter, the process of extracting the fat can damage cocoa's delicate taste. The best-quality cocoas have relatively high amounts of fat and the deepest, richest flavors. Cocoa contains 10% to 24% fat, compared with up to 38% in eating chocolate, and 50% in unsweetened baking chocolate.

TWO STYLES: NATURAL AND "DUTCHED"

The difference is an additional processing step. Cocoa is mildly acidic. Dutched cocoa has been alkalized; natural cocoa has not.

Nonalkalized or natural cocoa has long been the base for traditional American recipes. Natural cocoa is medium ochre brown in color and very bitter on the tongue.

Alkalized, Dutch-processed, or "Dutched" cocoa is the European standard and is less bitter tasting than natural cocoa. Small amounts of potassium carbonate are used to reduce acidity in the cocoa beans. Depending on the degree of alkalization, its color ranges from medium and deep reddish brown to charcoal brown, and finally towards black in some specialty products. The charcoal to black end of the spectrum indicates the highest pH values (that is, the highest degree of alkalization) and usually signals diminished chocolate flavor.



"A dessert maker who shuns cocoa is like a conductor who ignores an entire section of the orchestra," says Alice Medrich.



These cookies owe their chocolatey intensity to cocoa. Natural and Dutched cocoa both work well here.

Which cocoa is best? Both home cooks and food professionals are divided on their cocoa preferences, and many admit to confusion. Scores of recipes that I've tried with both natural and Dutch-processed reveal that the cocoa with the best flavor depends on how you use it.

NATURAL COCOA NEEDS COOKING; DUTCHED CAN STAND ALONE

Natural cocoa is best in recipes that have many

Natural cocoa gives a

sharp, fudge-like flavor;

Dutched is more

mellow, with a slightly

nutty taste.

ingredients, a large amount of sugar, or where the ingredients undergo considerable transformation in cooking or baking. Dutch-processed cocoa is usually a clear winner in foods where you'll taste the cocoa unaltered by large amounts of sugar, multiple ingredients, or cooking. In cakes, type and quantity of leavening may affect how well one cocoa performs over

the other, as does the acidity of other ingredients in the recipe. Certain recipes are successful and delicious made with either style of cocoa, so let your taste buds decide. Others may fail if the "wrong" cocoa is used. Here are guidelines for choosing the right cocoa.

Dusting, rolling, and sprinkling demand Dutched. And because you'll be tasting it directly on your tongue, it should be the best you can buy. Alkalization allows you to appreciate the rich, earthy, grown-up flavor of unsweetened cocoa without the shock of cocoa's natural acidity. Similarly, simple preparations such as hot cocoa or frozen desserts need Dutched cocoa.

Classic chocolate cake wants natural cocoa. When an American cake recipe calls for unsweet-

ened cocoa without specifying the type and the leaven is all or mostly baking soda, assume that nonalkalized cocoa is wanted; that's the cocoa traditionally available to American home cooks. Beware of switching from natural to Dutched cocoa in these recipes: you may be subtracting an acid ingredient (natural cocoa) and introducing an alkaline one

(Dutched cocoa) where there's already sufficient alkali, and the result could be a coal-black, soapy-tasting mess.

Cake recipes that call for Dutched cocoa were probably devised more recently and the leavens altered accordingly.

Tips for cooking with cocoa



SUBSTITUTING COCOA FOR CHOCOLATE

Cocoa can often be substituted for baking chocolate. Use 3 level tablespoons cocoa and 1 tablespoon butter for each ounce of unsweetened baking chocolate.



MEASURE COCOA LIKE FLOUR

Spoon the unsifted cocoa into a measuring cup and level it off without compacting it. Sift it after measuring to remove any lumps. If the recipe calls for measuring sifted cocoa, sift the cocoa over the measuring cup and then level it off without compacting it.



GETTING THE LUMPS OUT

When dissolving cocoa in liquid, stir just enough of the liquid into the cocoa to make a stiff paste. Stir and mash the paste until it's smooth and then stir in the rest of the liquid gradually. If you'll be adding sugar to the cocoa, do it before the liquid goes in.



BROWNIES, COOKIES, AND FUDGE SAUCE ARE SWITCH HITTERS

Brownies are a perfect vehicle for appreciating the difference in taste between cocoas. Both types produce delicious results, especially when high-quality cocoa is used. Natural cocoa gives the characteristic sharp, fudge-like chocolate flavor that brownie traditionalists prefer. Dutched cocoa produces an appealingly nutty, mellow taste, though probably more sophisticated than the brownies you ate as a child.

Both types of cocoa are delicious in fudge sauce recipes sweetened with white sugar. I prefer Dutched cocoa in fudge sauce recipes sweetened with brown sugar or dark corn syrup. Dutched cocoa produces a gorgeous dark color and mellow flavor, which won the taste test when I licked the sauce off my finger, but fell to second place over ice cream, where the sharper flavor of sauce made with natural cocoa is more exciting. Try Dutched cocoa for a sauce where subtlety will be appreciated, like one that will be served over a poached pear.

Old-Fashioned Hot Fudge Sauce

Hot fudge sauce may be stored in the refrigerator for at least a week and reheated gently in the microwave or in a pan of simmering water. *Yields 1½ cups*.

6 Tbs. natural or Dutch-processed cocoa ½ cup boiling water 3 Tbs. unsalted butter 1 cup sugar



Brush stray sugar crystals from the sides of the pot so that every crystal gets mixed into your hot fudge sauce.



A darker, more deeply

chocolatey brownie

results when you add

the cocoa to the

it's still hot.

melted butter while

2 Tbs. light corn syrup 1 tsp. vanilla extract

Put the cocoa in a small saucepan and pour in just enough of the boiling water to make a smooth paste. Add the rest; stir to dissolve. Add the butter and cook over low heat until the butter has melted. Gently stir in the sugar and corn syrup with a wooden spoon just until combined. With a wet paper towel or pastry brush, clean the sugar crystals from the sides of the pot. Bring the mixture to a simmer. As soon as you see tiny bubbles around the entire perimeter of the pot, set a timer for 8 min. Cook without stirring until the time is up. Adjust the heat so that the sauce boils actively but not furiously during this period. Meanwhile, wash your wooden spoon to remove undissolved sugar crystals and set it aside. Take the pan off the heat and use the clean wooden spoon to gently stir the vanilla into the sauce.



Fudge sauce made with natural cocoa has a tang that's pleasing, especially over vanilla ice cream.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1996

Phonos: Carl Dune

Rich Cocoa Brownies

Use cake flour for a brownie with an ultra-smooth texture, or all-purpose for one with just a hint of crumb. *Yields 16 brownies*.

6 oz. (12 Tbs.) unsalted butter
²/₃ cup natural or Dutch-processed cocoa
1 ¹/₄ cups sugar
¹/₄ tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla extract
3 eggs
2 ²/₃ oz. (²/₃ cup) cake flour or 2 ¹/₂ oz. (¹/₂ cup) all-purpose flour
¹/₂ cup chopped pecans or walnuts (optional)

Heat the oven to 350°F and grease a 9x9-inch pan. In a 2-qt. saucepan, melt the butter, allowing it to get quite hot. Take the pan from the heat and whisk in the cocoa. Let the mixture cool completely.

Whisk the sugar, salt, and vanilla into the cooled cocoa mixture. Add all the eggs at once and whisk again to combine. With a rubber spatula, fold in the flour just until incorporated. Fold in the nuts. Spread the batter in the pan and bake until a toothpick comes out moist and gooey but not wet, 18 to 20 min. Be careful not to overbake the brownies, as they'll toughen. Allow them to cool completely before cutting.

Hot Cocoa

Beating the hot cocoa until foamy before serving produces a lovely froth and actually improves the flavor. *Yields 2 cups*.

2 Tbs. Dutch-processed cocoa 2 Tbs. sugar; more to taste 1/4 cup water 13/4 cups milk

In a small saucepan, combine the cocoa, sugar, and just enough of the water to make a smooth paste. Add the

Whenever you're tasting cocoa plain and unaltered, such as sprinkled over and in hot cocoa, it should be Dutched.





rest of the water. Whisking constantly, bring the mixture to a simmer and let cook for about 30 seconds to bring out the maximum flavor of the cocoa. Whisk in the milk and heat to the desired serving temperature, without exceeding 175°F. (Overheating the milk destroys the flavor and velvety texture of the drink.) Remove the pan from the heat and using a wire whisk or hand-held electric mixer, beat the cocoa until foamy. If you're using a mixer, you may beat over very low heat to offset the cooling that takes place from beating, but don't let the cocoa exceed 175°. Serve immediately.

Frozen Mocha

Dutch-processed cocoa gives this dessert its rich chocolate flavor. *Yields 3 cups.*

½ cup Dutch-processed cocoa ¾ cup sugar 4 tsp. instant espresso powder ½ cup water 2 cups plus 2 Tbs. milk

In a medium saucepan, combine the cocoa, sugar, espresso powder, and just enough of the water to make a smooth paste. Add the rest of the water. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, whisking constantly to prevent scorching. Continue to whisk and simmer for 1 min. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in



For Frozen Mocha, spin the frozen chunks in a food processor or blender.

2 cups of the milk. Pour into a shallow cake pan or icecube trays and freeze until hard.

Break up the frozen mixture with a fork and put it in a food processor. Add the remaining 2 Tbs. milk. Process until no lumps remain and the mixture is thick, slushy, and lightens in color. Immediately pour into goblets and serve. Or, refreeze the slush overnight to harden and serve it in scoops.

Cocoa Walnut Butter Cookies

Underbake these brownie-like cookies slightly and you'll get cookies that are crisp outside and chewy inside. *Yields about 30 cookies*.

4½ oz. (1 cup) all-purpose flour
½ cup natural or Dutch-processed cocoa
½ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. salt
3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter
2 Tbs. vegetable shortening
½ cup packed brown sugar, sifted free of lumps
½ cup sugar
1 egg



Slushy spoon drink or served in scoops, Frozen Mocha is refreshing and easy to prepare.

1 tsp. vanilla extract 3/4 cup chopped walnuts

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat it to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment or foil. In a medium mixing bowl, combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda, and baking powder. Mix thoroughly with a wire whisk. Set aside.

In a medium mixing bowl, beat the butter and shortening with an electric mixer until creamy. Add the sugars, beating until well combined. Beat in the egg and vanilla. Turn the mixer to low speed and beat in the flour mixture just until incorporated. Mix in the nuts.

Drop heaping teaspoonfuls of batter about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart on the prepared baking sheets. Bake for 10 to 12 min., rotating the sheets about halfway through the baking time from top to bottom and front to back to ensure even baking. Cookies will puff up and then settle down slightly when done. With a metal spatula, transfer the cookies to a wire rack to cool.

Alice Medrich rediscovered cocoa while she was writing Chocolate & The Art of Low-Fat Desserts (Warner, 1994). She lives in Berkeley, California.

COCOA BY MAIL Here's a list of my favorites and where

Dutch-processed cocoas

to find them:

Valrhôna Cocoa mail order from New York Cake (800/942-2539); \$7 per pound. De Zaan Dutch Cocoa-mail order from Albert Uster (800/231-8154); \$7.95 per 2.2-pound bag. **Bensdorp Royal** Cocoa-mail order from Dairy Fresh Chocolates (800/336-5536): \$3.99 per pound. **Merckens Processed** Dutch Cocoa—mail order from the King Arthur Flour Baker's Catalogue (800/827-6836); \$3.10 per pound.

Van Leer 120 Cocoa—mail order from New York Cake (800/942-2539); \$5 per pound. Droste—available in supermarkets; \$4.39 per 8 ounces.

Natural cocoas Merckens Natural

Cocoa—mail order from the King Arthur Flour Baker's Catalogue (800/827-6836); \$3.10 per pound.

Guittard High-Fat
Natural—mail order
from Paradigm
Foodworks
(800/234-0250);
\$3.50 per pound.
Nestlés Cocoa—
available in supermarkets; \$2.19 per
8-ounce tin.

Though the word vinegar comes from the French for sour wine—vin aigre—vinegars are made from a variety of ingredients, including rice, cider, malt, and grain.

Few kitchen staples are as versatile as vinegar. A key ingredient for salad dressings and pickles, vinegar also flavors sauces and soups. Old American cookbooks include recipes for vinegar pies and candies, and there are those who swear that a daily thimbleful of cider vinegar is the secret to a long and healthy life. Italians like vinegar with strawberries and even drizzle a few drops over ice cream. When the meal is through, vinegar can clean your countertops.

Vinegars are made from a variety of ingredients, including wine, beer, hard cider, and grain alcohol, and each type has its own characteristic flavor. Regardless of what it's made from, all vinegar is made by the same process—fermentation. Under the right conditions, specific bacteria convert the alcohol in wine, beer, or other alcoholic liquid into

acetic acid. The best vinegars ferment naturally and are then aged in wooden casks to develop complex and intense flavors. Some producers bypass the slow fermentation process with heat and chemicals, and their vinegars are harsh and metallic tasting.

The oldest and most common type of vinegar is wine

making regions of the world. As with wine, the more robust, full-flavored red-wine vinegars are best added to heartier, more assertive foods, while the lighter, sharper white-wine and Champagne vinegars enhance fresher, more delicate flavors.

Fruit and herb vinegars are simply wine vinegars in-

To judge the quality of a vinegar, taste it. The best have a pleasant depth of flavor.

vinegar. Richer in flavor than vinegar from grain or cider, it's valued for its fruity aromas and faintly nutty undertastes.

Red-wine, white-wine, and Champagne vinegars are the basic varieties. The best are made in the wine-

fused with other ingredients, such as raspberries or tarragon. These are especially handy when the flavorings are unavailable in their fresh state.

Sherry vinegar, made from sherry wine, has a sweeter, more complex flavor than

ordinary wine vinegar. Sherry vinegars are aged for a minimum of six years in a solera, a network of oak barrels in which different vintages of vinegar are blended. The best sherry vinegars are aged longer, but claims of vintage on a sherry vinegar label can be misleading. The age is based not on a single vintage, but on an average one. The best sherry vinegars come from southern Spain and are sometimes labeled Xeres or Jerez—Spanish for sherry.

Authentic balsamic vinegar is extremely rare (and expensive) and labeled aceto balsamico tradizionale—indicating that it was made in Italy by the traditional artisan method. Technically a whitewine vinegar, true balsamic vinegar becomes rich and dark through a long process that begins with fresh white wine that is cooked down to a thick,

Photoe Scorr Phil



syrupy consistency and then fermented and aged in a succession of special wooden casks for a minimum of twelve years. Pungent, exotic, and slightly sweet, true balsamic vinegar should only be savored in its purest form, never heated or mixed with other ingredients, but judiciously drizzled on food or sipped as you would a fine liqueur.

Commercial balsamic vinegar is actually a red-wine vinegar fortified with concentrated grape juice and sometimes caramelized sugar that's intended to imitate true balsamic vinegar. While this widely available balsamic vinegar may not compare to the real thing, some brands are valued for their dark, slightly sweet, pungent characteristics. It's often added to slowcooked foods, blended with oil and herbs for dressings, or used as a deglazing liquid for meat-based sauces.

White balsamic vinegar is another loose interpretation of traditional balsamic. Producers add cooked-down grape juice to ordinary white-wine vinegar to give white balsamic its amber color and slightly sweet flavor.

Cider vinegar is milder and sweeter than most wine vinegars. The best are unfiltered and unpasteurized. Good cider vinegar is slightly cloudy, like fresh cider, and has a fruity, apple flavor.

Rice vinegar, also called rice-wine vinegar (although it's made from grain, not grapes), comes in three varieties—white, black, and red. White, with its pale, golden color and delicate flavor, is by far the most popular. Japanese rice vinegar is milder and sweeter than the Chinese, which tends to be more acidic and sharp. In either case, look for "pure" rice vinegar to

avoid those that are seasoned or sweetened.

Black rice vinegar (also called Chinese black vinegar) and red rice vinegar are white rice vinegar with sugar and spices added. Their stronger flavors make them less versatile than other vinegars.

Malt vinegar is traditionally made from beer and is sometimes colored with caramel and infused with wood shavings. Its mild flavor makes it a popular choice for pickles and dressings.

Distilled vinegar is commercially processed from grain alcohol. Most are quite pungent, unperfumed, and colorless, although some have coloring added to imitate wine vinegars. These vinegars are used widely in processed foods and preserves. As a cook, the best use I find for distilled vinegar is disinfecting my cutting boards.

More than one way to skin a nut

Having a well-stocked pantry means that you can turn out linzertorte or almond cookies when the inspiration hits, without a special trip to the market. Since many recipes for cakes and cookies call for skinned or blanched nuts. it's helpful to know the best way to get rid of the papery, slightly bitter outer skin that can interfere with the appearance and texture of baked goods. Blanching, boiling, and roasting are the most common methods for skinning nuts.

Blanching is often used to loosen the skins of almonds and pistachios. Put the shelled nuts in a bowl, cover with

boiling water, and let them sit for a minute or two. Too much time in the water may soften the nuts. Drain and let the nuts cool a bit. The skins should slip off easily when you rub the nuts between two fingers. If the skins are stubborn, blanch the nuts for another minute in boiling water.

Boiling hazelnuts with baking soda is recommended by Rose Levy Beranbaum in *The Cake Bible* as a way to easily remove their bitter, stubborn skins. For ½ cup hazelnuts, add 2 tablespoons baking



Rubbing roasted hazelnuts in a towel quickly loosens their skins. Don't fret about getting rid of every last bit of skin: some will always stick.

soda to 1½ cups boiling water and boil the nuts. The alkaline baking soda loosens the skins, and the water turns black. After three minutes, remove a nut from the pan and run it under cold water. If the skin doesn't slip off easily, boil the nuts for a few more minutes. When the skins are loosened, rinse the nuts thoroughly under cold water.

Roasting is a good way to remove the skins of peanuts and hazelnuts. Spread the nuts in a single layer on a baking sheet and roast for 10 to 12 minutes at 350°F, shaking the pan occasionally to prevent scorching. Pour a handful of the warm nuts into a heavy cotton towel and rub them between layers of the cloth to remove the skins. It's nearly impossible to remove every speck of skin, so don't fret over small bits that won't come off. You can also use this method for pistachios, but roasting almonds only seems to make the skins more tenacious.

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking. ◆



To rid almonds of their tenacious skin, blanch them quickly. After a one- or two-minute-soak, the skins should peel off easily.

76

Kitchen GARDEN

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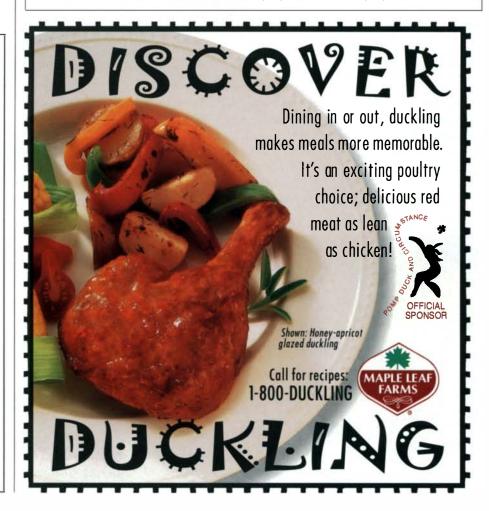
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The ideal pie crust is often described with a single phrase: "tender-flaky." Yet tenderness and flakiness are entirely separate qualities in a pie crust, and opposite techniques are required to achieve them. This doesn't mean that you can't make a crust that's both flaky and tender, but first it helps to understand the science behind the two methods.

TENDER CRUSTS ARE CRUMBLY

Tender best describes pastry that crumbles easily, like shortbread cookies. The absence of the strong elastic protein known as gluten is what makes a pastry tender. Since gluten begins to develop the instant you add liquid to flour and gets stronger with kneading or mixing, you need to take deliberate steps to prevent it from forming when your goal is a tender crust.

Coat the proteins with fat to avoid gluten. By working the fat into the flour before adding any liquid, you grease the proteins, coating them so that they can't bond together into gluten. Once the proteins are coated with fat, the dough

The Secrets of Tender, Flaky Pie Crust



A tender-flaky crust is the result of a compromise. Work some of the butter into the flour for tenderness; leave some in larger pieces for flakes.

will stay tender even after the liquid has been added.

A little acid helps keep crusts tender. Adding acidic ingredients to the dough will break apart long gluten strands, making the crust more tender. For this reason, many pie crust recipes call for a few drops of lemon juice or vinegar. Sometimes I use sour cream in place of water to moisten the dough—the acidity along with the additional fat produces a sensationally tender crust.

Soft fats grease proteins more easily. Shortening is softer than cold butter and therefore easier to blend with flour. The result—a more tender crust. Melted fats or liquid ones (like oil) make extremely tender crusts. In the 1930s, a popular recipe for pie crust called for combining warm vegetable oil with the flour. This recipe produced a crust that was fall-apart tender without a single flake.

FLAKY CRUSTS HAVE LOTS OF CRISP LAYERS

A flaky crust is characterized by thin, crisp layers of pastry. The layers, or flakes, are made by flattening cold fat between layers of flour. In a hot oven, this cold, firm fat acts as a spacer and remains solid just long enough for the dough on either side to begin to cook. Eventually, the fat melts and steam from the dough pushes the layers apart. The more layers of fat, the more flakes in the crust.



Tender pastry crumbles easily. The butter for this pastry was softened and then thoroughly worked into the flour with warm hands.



Flaky pastry has many thin, crisp layers. This pastry was made with cold butter cut into small pieces and then quickly rolled out with flour and ice water.



Tender or flaky crusts depend on how the fat is added. On the left, soft butter was blended with the flour; the color shows how the flour has absorbed the butter. The resulting crust will be crumbly and tender. On the right, cold butter was left in pea-sized pieces; these will form tiny pockets to make flaky layers.



A messy-looking method for perfect pie crust. Large chunks of cold butter and cold flour may look like paint flaking off a wall, but this method produces sensational tender-flaky crusts.

The size of the fat is crucial. The pieces of fat must be large enough so that they won't melt instantly in the hot oven, but not so large that they leave holes in the dough when they melt. As a rule, cut or break the fat into pieces that are between the size of a pea and ½-inch cubes.

TENDER AND FLAKY ALL IN ONE

So now comes the obvious question: If you need warm, soft fat well incorporated for tender pastry and whole cold pieces of fat for flakes, how can you get a pie crust that's both tender and flaky?

A little compromise is all it takes. The most common technique for pie crust is to rapidly work some of the fat into the flour with your fingertips for tenderness and leave some large pieces of cold fat for flakiness. Using a combination of hard and soft fats (such as butter and shortening) also works well. The softer shortening will coat the proteins, and the harder butter will produce the flakes.

Rolling out the crust flattens the fat. The standard practice of rolling out dough with a rolling pin actually contributes to making pie crusts that are both tender and flaky. As pieces of fat are rolled and flattened, they actually grease the flour around them, coating the proteins, yet remain intact enough to form layers as the crust bakes.

With a little practice, cold fat, and a rolling pin, you can flatten pieces of fat quickly without melting them. If the fat softens and soaks into the dough, flakiness is lost.

A TECHNIQUE FOR PERFECT TENDER-FLAKY PIE CRUST

I learned an easy way to flatten cold fat from Jim Dodge, author of *Baking with Jim Dodge*. Following the amounts in your pie crust recipe, cut the butter into ½-inch pieces and toss them into a bowl with the flourand salt. Put the

bowl in the freezer for 15 minutes. Dump the flour and butter onto the counter and roll a large rolling pin over it. If the butter is too cold, it will squirt away. Wait a minute, but don't let the butter get soft. This flour-butter mess will stick to the rolling pin. Don't worry: just scrape it off with a scraper or spatula, gather the mixture back together, and keep rolling. The flour-coated butter will begin to look like paint flakes.

Work fast. If at any time the butter starts to soften, scrape the dough back into the bowl and put it in the freezer for 5 minutes. Ideally, gather and roll the dough five or six times. Scrape the dough into the bowl and put it back in the freezer for 5 minutes, and then gently mix in the liquid called for in your recipe until the pastry holds together.

To make tender pastry	Why					
Blend soft fat into the flour before adding any liquid.	Fat coats the proteins and prevents them from forming gluten.					
Instead of water, use an ingredient that is part fat, like sour cream, cream, or egg yolks.	Gluten can't form without water, and the additional fat contributes to tenderness.					
Add acid to the dough in the form of lemon juice, vinegar, or sour cream.	Acid breaks long gluten strands.					
To make flaky pastry	Why					
Keep the fat cold and in large pieces (pea-sized to ½-inch cubes).	Large, cold pieces will remain firm in the oven long enough to create flakes.					
Flatten large pieces of cold fat.	Chunky pieces will make holes in the crust rather than act as spacers.					

Shirley O. Corriher, of Atlanta, teaches food science and cooking classes around the country. She is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking. ◆

79







The haunting flavor of the Asian spice known as star anise recalls both anise seed and fennel seed, but star anise is sweeter, fuller, and more like licorice. Although it's botanically unrelated to both spices, star anise

does share their primary

aromatic compound, the essential oil anethole.

A MAINSTAY OF THE ASIAN PANTRY

Star anise is used mainly by the Chinese and Vietnamese, who cook with it the way westerners incorporate bay leaves. It's the dominant ingredient in Chinese fivespice powder, which is used to flavor roast poultry, meats, and marinades. (Five-spice powder also contains Sichuan peppercorns, fennel seeds, cinnamon, and cloves.)

Whole stars are often used to infuse long-simmered soups and stews. If you've ever tasted the North Vietnamese beef and rice-noodle soup called *phō*, you've tasted star anise and the fragrant note it lends when combined with cinnamon, ginger, and shallots. (See recipe on p. 66.)

Liqueurs such as anisette and pastis owe their licorice notes to star anise. Sometimes used to flavor chewing gum and cough syrups, star anise also scents soap and perfumes. In the Orient, it's chewed whole as a breath freshener.

HOW TO FIND IT, STORE IT, AND USE IT

You'll find the best star anise in Asian markets. It's sometimes mistakenly labeled as anise seed, but look for the characteristic eight-pointed star shape and you won't go wrong. Buy star anise whole: it's more aromatic unbroken and makes

Inside each of the star's points nestles a glossy seed, fainter in taste and aroma than the fruit itself.

an arresting garnish floating in a broth or sauce. And whole stars are easier to pick out after cooking: the pod itself isn't to be eaten.

Keep star anise in an airtight glass jar and store it in a cool, dark cupboard; it should remain fragrant for months. To pulverize star anise, use a spice mill, a coffee grinder, or a mortar and pestle.

Micol Negrin is a chef and freelance writer in New York City. ◆

EXPERIMENT WITH STAR ANISE

- ♦ In fish stews and broth:
 Star anise provides a deep,
 lingering aroma.
 Its mellow flavor
 also enhances
 lamb stewed
 with ginger
- and perfumes stir-fried noodles, meat, and vegetables.
- ◆ In hot mulled apple cider or tea: Add one whole star along with a stick of cinnamon and three cloves, plus a strip of lemon or orange zest.
- ◆ In a pear-poaching liquid: Slip star anise into a mixture of half white wine, half water, and add some fresh ginger, a cinnamon stick, and a bit of lemon zest.
- ◆ In batters for gingerbread or spice cake: Toss in a flavor-deepening pinch of freshly ground star anise.

ILLICIUM VERUM

Star anise is the sun-dried, star-shaped fruit of a small evergreen tree native to southern China and Vietnam. The tree is cultivated for the spice.

Once ground, star anise quickly loses its aroma, so crush only as much as you need.

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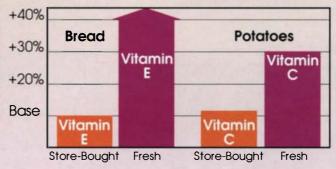
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Essential Cookbooks for Fish Lovers

'm embarrassed to admit that for the first part of my life, the only fish I would eat were swordfish and canned tuna—that is, fish that doesn't really taste like fish. Then I went to cooking school and the waters opened up, so to speak. I quickly learned to love fresh scallops cooked with their coral, skate sautéed in brown butter, and other previously unknown delicacies. But my library was sadly lacking cookbooks on what had become one of my favorite foods. Since that time, I've eagerly sought out references and recipes for fish. Here are four I like best.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

COOKERY

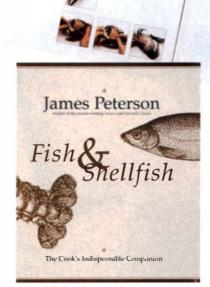
by A J. McCLANE
ARIE deZANGER

This authoritative guide includes more than 350 recipes.

A. J. McClane's Encyclopedia of Fish Cookery is a splendid resource, and there's really nothing else quite like it. McClane, who died in 1991, was the editor of Field & Stream for years, as well as a restaurant consultant, an accomplished cook. and a sportsman who travelled the world. His Encyclopedia is truly international in scope. Close to 200 entries, from Aalmutter to Zubatec, cover not only specific fish and shellfish, but also such topics as Aspic and Butters.

McClane has a nice turn of phrase and a sly wit, whether discussing "the semantics of a pork chop" or a classic seafood stew: "Like holy matrimony, a bouillabaisse should not be entered into lightly or unadvisedly." The information here ranges from the practical to the esoteric; literary and historical references abound, as do illuminating anecdotes from his travels as fisherman and cook.

The only disadvantage is that the Encyclopedia was published in 1977 and its age is showing. Some of the recipes are surprisingly contemporary, but others are sadly dated. Considering the level of sophistication of the book, it's hard to imagine how a dish of calico scallops and canned peaches made the cut twenty years ago. Nevertheless, although it would be nice to have a revised edi-



Peterson's expertise as a teacher makes this volume a masterpiece.

tion of McClane's book, no serious cook or fish lover should be without this one.

James Peterson's Fish & Shellfish: The Cook's Indispensable Companion, however, is hot off the press—and it's a masterpiece. Peterson, a

guides I've ever seen for such techniques as cleaning and boning round fish and flatfish, filleting, and cleaning squid. Peterson's recipes sound so delicious

that I want to try just about every one. (Looking for a dinner-party dish, I only made it to the fourth page of the recipes before I decided on Roast Monkfish with Sage & Whole Garlic Cloves—it was wonderful.)

McClane believes that "like holy matrimony, a bouillabaisse should not be entered into lightly or unadvisedly."

cooking teacher and the author of the excellent Sauces and Splendid Soups (and a contributing editor to Fine Cooking), aims to make cooking fish "seem as easy as it really is." His step-by-step color photographs offer the clearest

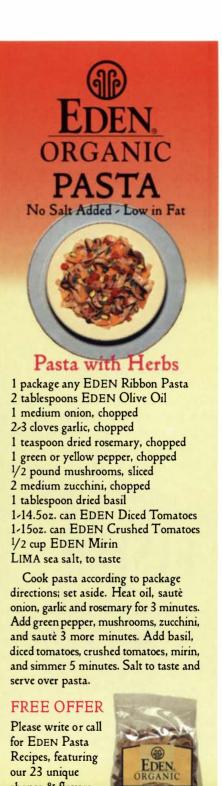
The recipes for finfish are organized by cooking technique, from baking and braising to marinating and smoking to preparing fish to serve raw. (Microwaving gets a begrudging two pages.) The various types of shellfish, with their



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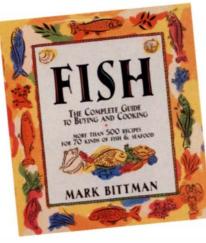
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REVIEWS

more individual personalities, are dealt with in separate chapters, and there's also a section on "Seafood in Other Guises"—that is, in salads, pastas, and so forth, with a final chapter on sauces, condiments, and basics.

Peterson's expertise as a teacher is perhaps most evident in the many boxes and charts that fill the book. These explain techniques (from making your own breadcrumbs to taking conch out of the shell), offer tips (like how to keep fish from sticking to the pan), describe ingredients, or list, for example, different coatings for deep-frying. Throughout the book, the author encourages readers to improvise, and to this end he includes steps for developing various types



Simple, uncomplicated recipes are the heart of Bittman's book.

of dishes and charts, such as one on fish soups and stews that gives "flavor base," liquid, type of fish, "finish," and garnish for classics from around the world. Even a seasoned cook would learn something new from this impressive cookbook and reference.

Just as enthusiastic but less ambitious is Mark Bittman's Fish: The Complete Guide to Buying & Cooking. Bittman's goal is really the same as

84

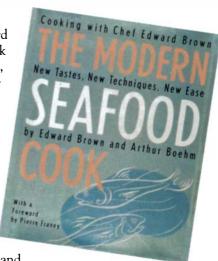
Peterson's, to show readers just how easy fish cookery can be—or, as he says, "Buy it right, cook it simply." Bittman describes what to look for at the market and discusses both health benefits and concerns, then deals with preparing and cooking fish. Techniques are illustrated by line drawings rather than photographs, but they are particularly clear.

The organization of the book is simple: a few introductory chapters followed by seventy kinds of fish and shellfish arranged alphabetically. For each type of fish or shellfish, Bittman gives a general description, common forms (whole, fillets, etc.), and buying tips, as well as the Latin name and other common names—particularly helpful because many fish are

niques, New Ease, Edward Brown, chef of New York City's Sea Grill restaurant, with co-author Arthur Boehm, offers his approach to the topic. Like Peterson and Bittman, Brown is eager to introduce the uninitiated to the rewards of cooking fish and seafood, and he obviously truly enjoys teaching. Many recipes contain paraphetical courions, tips or

enthetical cautions, tips, and encouragement (e.g., "If you are uncertain about doneness, split the tail...").

Brown's buying guide covers the basics, and his tour of four types of fish market—a top-quality store, a neighborhood fish seller, the supermarket, and Chinatown—is a clever way of pointing out



A top restaurant chef offers innovative recipes and detailed techniques.

shadowed to a certain extent by Peterson's book, which covers the subject in greater detail and offers many "new tastes" and "new techniques." But being a fish lover, I still would want Brown's book too, so I can add recipes like Poached Salmon Salad with Black Bean Mayonnaise to my repertoire.

Judith Sutton skewered countless pounds of shrimp when she worked at Sign of the Dove in New York City. She now develops recipes and writes about all sorts of food. ◆

Peterson's step-by-step photos are the clearest guides I've seen for such techniques as cleaning, boning, and filleting fish.

identified differently in different parts of the country.

But it's the recipes that are the heart of this book. Most are simple and uncomplicated, though certainly not unsophisticated: Lime-Broiled Mackerel with Herbs, Crispy Skin Salmon with Gingery Greens, and Broiled Mussels with Pernod Butter. Ingredient lists are on the short side—always a plus for busy cooks and most recipes suggest other fish that can be substituted. Whether you're looking for an easy family supper or a quick company dish, you'll find plenty of choices here—more

In The Modern Seafood Cook: New Tastes, New Tech-

than 500 of them, in fact.

the pitfalls that may await the unwary, as well as the benefits of shopping wisely. The technique section, while quite detailed, is illustrated by rather minimalist line drawings.

The recipes are creative and generally somewhat more upscale than Bittman's—Lobster & Caviar Salad, Seared Swordfish with Coriander & Beet Juice Oil, Spicy Buckwheat Noodles with Shrimp—but they're not the type of chef's recipes that assume you have a kitchen staff of ten at the ready.

When this book came out last year, I was really taken with Brown's imaginative but not difficult recipes and his passion for his subject. Now it's over-

PUBLISHING INFORMATION

The Encyclopedia of Fish Cookery, by A. J. McClane. Holt, 1977.
\$65, hardcover; 512 pp.
ISBN 0-8050-1046-7.
Fish & Shellfish: The Cook's Indispensable Companion, by James Peterson. Morrow, 1996.
\$40, hardcover; 416 pp.
ISBN 0-688-12737-1.
Fish: The Complete Guide to Buying & Cooking, by Mark Bittman. Macmillan, 1994.
\$27.50, hardcover; 368 pp.
ISBN 0-02-510775-5.
The Modern Seafood Cook: New

Tastes, New Techniques, New Ease, by Edward Brown & Arthur Boehm. Potter, 1995. \$30, hardcover; 340 pp. ISBN 0-517-70241-X.

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25th Annual National Shrimp Festival—October 10–13, Public Beach Area, Highway 59 South, Gulf Shores. Alabama's largest and most popular shrimp festival. Call 334/968-7511.

53rd National Peanut Festival & Fair—November 1–9, Houston County Farm Center, Dothan. This annual event draws over 126,000 attendees and honors the peanut and all agribusiness in the Wiregrass area. Call 334/793-4323.

ARIZONA

10th Annual La Fiesta de los Chiles—October 19–20, Tucson Botanical Gardens. Held in celebration of the chile pepper, featuring both piquant and mild international chile cuisines. Call 602/326-9686.

ARKANSAS

20th Annual Arkansas Rice Festival—October 12–13, Weiner. Rice history, rice cooking contest, old-fashioned rice threshing. Call 501/684-2284.

CALIFORNIA

Fetzer Harvest Festival—October 5 &6, Hopland. A celebration of the annual Mendocino County grape harvest, with gourmet foods, wine tastings, garden tours, and live music. Call 707/744-7447.

3rd Annual Paso Robles Harvest Wine Fair—October 19–20, Paso Robles. Seminars on food and wine pairings held at area wineries, a Grand Tasting of wine and gourmet hors d'oeuvres, and special winery events featuring locally produced food. Call 805/239-8463

Great Chefs at the Robert Mondavi Winery—November 15–17, Oakville. Three-day event featuring cooking demonstrations by Chef Pierre Gagnaire of three-star Michelin Guiderated Pierre Gagnaire restaurant in France, winery tours, seminars, special lunches, and dinners. November 18: One-day event with Chef Gagnaire. Call 800-MONDAVI.

CONNECTICUT

Mystic Seaport's Annual Chowderfest—October 12–14, Mystic. The Museum's tall ships, historic buildings, and scenic waterfront are the backdrop as local community groups vie for the most popular style of chowder. Call 203/572-5315.

FLORIDA

20th Annual Boggy Bayou Mullet Festival—October 18–20, Niceville. Seafood festival featuring mullet fish. Call 904/678-1615.

HAWAII

26th Annual Kona Coffee Cultural Festival— November 1–9, Kailua-Kona. Call 808/326-7820.

ILLINOIS

27th Burgoo Festival—October 13, Utica. Featuring old-fashioned pioneer stew simmered for 15 hours in four 55-gallon kettles. Call 815/667-4861.

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Pumpkinfest—October 5, Anamosa. The World Confederation Weigh-Off is held here, along with a pumpkin recipe cook-off. Call 319/462-4879.

LOUISIANA

23rd Gumbo Festival—October 11–13, Bridge City. Call 504/436-4712.

MARYLAND

30th Annual St. Mary's County Oyster Festival—October 19–20, County Fairgrounds, Leonardtown. Featuring the National Oyster Shucking Championship and National Oyster Cook-Off contest, plus regional foods and entertainment. Call 301/863-5015.

MASSACHUSETTS

10th Annual Harvest Moon Festival—October 6, Cambridge. New England farmers, top regional chefs, and specialty food purveyors will converge on Charles Square to sell their goods. Call 617/661-5040.

Cranberry Harvest Festival—October 12–14, South Carver. Watch workers harvest the Edaville cranberry bogs while you sample cranberry pies, sauces, crisps, and compotes. Call 508/295-5799.

NEW YORK

Classic Pastry Arts Program—October 1 to March 26, The French Culinary Institute, New York. Intensive six-month career program teaching classic French pastry techniques and dessert composition under the direction of acclaimed Master Pastry Chef Jacques Torres. Call 212/219-8890 or 888/FCI-CHEF.

NORTH CAROLINA

13th Barbecue Festival—October 26, Lexington. Call 704/956-2952.

OHIO

Circleville Pumpkin Show—October 16–19, Circleville. Pumpkin cooking contests and the world's largest pumpkin and pie. Call 614/474-7000.

OREGON

Verboort Sausage Festival—November 2, Verboort. Featuring homesmoked sausages and sauerkraut plus all the fixings. Call 503/357-5791.

PENNSYLVANIA

Cuisines of Philadelphia—October 8–13, Philadelphia. A week of seminars, tours, cooking demonstrations, gourmet meals, and wine tastings featuring Old World Pennsylvania Dutch cooking and Philadelphia's sophisticated cuisine. Sponsored by the Amer-

ican Institute of Wine and Food and the Smithsonian Institution. Call 202/357-4700.

RHODE ISLAND

4th Annual Oktoberfest—October 11–13, Newport. Featuring a German food marketplace, a Biergarten and Weingarten, and traditional German music and dance. Call 401/846-1600.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Apple Harvest Festival— October 19, Windy Hill Orchard Cider Mill, York. Cider making, pumpkin picking, and old-fashioned corn grinding. Call 803/684-0690.



TEXAS

2nd Annual Ciao Chow Italian Food & Wine Festival—September 1 through October 15, Rice Epicurean Markets, Houston. Appearances by well-known Italian chefs, vintner dinners, winemaker discussions, and samplings of over 200 Italian food items. Call Holly Moore at 713/840-8406.

Original Terlingua International Championship Chili Cookoff—November 1–2, Arturo White's Store, Terlingua. Qualifying chili cooks from around the country are invited to participate in the cook-off and chili showmanship event. Call 903/874-5601.

30th Annual Terlingua International Chili Championship—November 2, Rancho CASI de los Chisos, Terlingua. Sponsored by the Chili Appreciation Society International. Call 806/352-8783.

VIRGINIA

24th Annual Chincoteague Island Oyster Festival—October 12, Maddox Family Campground, Chincoteague. Call 804/336-6161.

WASHINGTON

13th International Conference on Gastronomy—Pacific Influences on the 21st Century Table—October 3–6, Seattle. Seminars and tastings explore the culinary contributions of Asia, the Pacific, Australia, and New Zealand to America's table. Sponsored by The American Institute of Wine and Food. Call 415/255-3000.

Oyster and Ale University—October 16, Pier 56 Restaurant, Seattle. A five-course oyster and ale event. October 18: Oyster New Year. A tasting of more than 30 varieties of oysters on the half shell, paired with Northwest wines. Call 206/224-7157.









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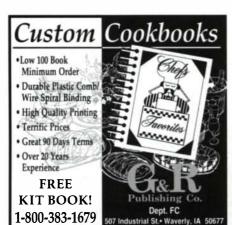


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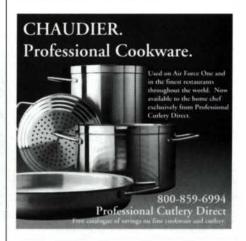
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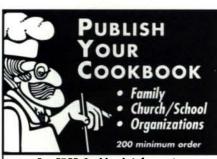
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RECIPES

COVER RECIPE

Pasta & Ragù 38

APPETIZERS

Baked Marinated Eggplant 37 Country Pâté with Pistachios 61 Fresh Corn & Cheese Tamales 56 Spicy Beef Tamales 56 Sweet Potato Tamales 56

DESSERTS, CAKES & PASTRY

Apple-Brandy Puffy Pancake 47 Basic Puffy Pancake 47 CocoaWalnut Butter Cookies 73 Drunken Figs with Anise 39 Frozen Mocha 72 Hot Cocoa 72 Old-Fashioned Hot Fudge Sauce 71 Rich Cocoa Brownies 72

MAIN DISHES Meat

Braised Beef 38 **Poultry**

Chicken & Dumplings 51 Chicken with Garlic & Olives 50 Coquu Vin 50

Vegetable

Puffy Pancake with Red Pepper & Goat Cheese 47

Pasta & Ragù 38

SAUCES, CONDIMENTS & SEASONINGS

Old-Fashioned Hot Fudge Sauce 71

SIDE DISHES

Artichoke Gratin 44 Baked Marinated Eggplant 37 Butternut Squash Gratin with Onion & Sage 44 Celery Root & Potato Gratin 44 Long-Cooked Green Beans with Oregano 38

SOUPS, STEWS & STOCKS Pho 66

TECHNIQUES

Baking chewy oatmeal cookies 8; pâté in a water bath 60; tender, flaky pie crust 78; vegetable gratins 40-44 Boning chicken thighs 22 Braising beef 36

Browning, beef and vegetables for ragù 36; chicken for a fricassée 49

Choosing vegetables for a gratin 42 Cooking acidic foods in foil 12 Cutting up chicken 20

Grilling pizza 6 Lining a terrine 59

Making buttercream 6

Making a crust for a gratin 43 Making a puffy pancake 45-46

Making a ragu 36-38

Reducing, & deglazing for a ragù 36-38; cooking liquid for a fricassée 49

Seasoning a pâté 58-59

Skinning nuts 76

Steaming, clams 12; tamales 54-55

Testing a scale for accuracy 63

Thickening a sauce, by reduction 49; with beurre manie 49; with a liaison 50

Weighing dry ingredients 62-63 Wrapping tamales 54

INGREDIENTS

Baker's cheese 8

Beurre manié 49

Chicken, browning 49; choosing for fricassées 48; cutting up 20

Chicken stock 20

Clams, steaming 12

Cocoa, Dutch-processed 69-71; natural 69-71

Cornhusks 53

Fatback 58

Forcemeat 57-59

Liaison 50

Masa harina 53

Oxtails 64-65

Pancetta 59

Pecans, harvesting & storing 10

Quatre épices 58

Rice noodles 65

Staranise 65, 80

Vinegar varieties 74

Winter squash 14

TOOLS

Gratin dishes 40 Kitchen scales 62-63 Terrines 60

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Page	Calc total	ories fat	Protein (g)	Carb (g)	total	sat .	ats (g) mono	poly	Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
Baked Marinated Eggplant	37	150	85%	1	6	14	2	10	1	0	135	2	based on 1/8 recipe
Pasta & Ragù	38	470	8%	17	88	4.5	0.5	2.5	1.5	5	460	6	4 oz. pasta w/sauce
Braised Beef	38	310	47%	39	0	16	6	9	1	130	190	0	based on 1/8 recipe
Long-Cooked Green Beans	38	100	65%	2	8	7	1	5	1	0	490	4	based on 1/8 recipe
Drunken Figs with Anise	39	300	15%	3	60	5	0	1	3	0	10	6	based on 1/8 recipe
Celery Root & Potato Gratin	44	230	56%	8	19	14	8	4	1	50	430	4	
Butternut Squash Gratin	44	300	52%	5	36	18	9	6	1	50	290	8	based on 1/2 recipe
Artichoke Gratin	44	240	45%	10	29	12	2	8	1	5	830	12	based on 1/2 recipe
Basic Puffy Pancake	47	300	61%	13	17	20	10	7	2	360	710	1	per half pancake
Apple-Brandy Puffy Pancake	47	490	58%	13	38	32	18	10	2	390	710	2	per half pancake
Puffy Pancake with Red Pepper	47	380	62%	18	18	26	14	8	2	370	860	1	per half pancake
Coq au Vin	50	590	56%	39	10	37	14	15	6	145	600	1	
Chicken with Garlic & Olives	50	350	53%	36	2	21	5	11	4	105	510	1	
Chicken & Dumplings	51	520	35%	41	42	20	9	7	3	270	1150	3	without skin
Fresh Corn & Cheese Tamales	56	310	63%	7	24	22	7	9	4	15	610	3	per tamale
Sweet Potato Tamales	56	270	57%	3	28	17	4	8	5	0	540	3	per tamale
Spicy Beef Tamales	56	310	63%	8	21	22	6	10	4	20	750	3	per tamale
Country Pâté with Pistachios	61	80	73%	4	1	6	2	3	1	25	190	0	per ounce
Phõ	66	600	20%	37	84	13	5	5	1	65	1460	7	based on 1/2 recipe
Old-Fashioned Hot Fudge Sauce	71	60	27%	0	13	2.0	1.0	0.5	0	5	0	1	per tablespoon
Rich Cocoa Brownies	72	180	52%	2	21	10	6	3	1	65	45	1	per brownie
Hot Cocoa	72	190	37%	8	25	8	5	2	0	30	105	2	per cup
Frozen Mocha	72	340	20%	9	67	8	5	2	0	25	90	4	per cup
Cocoa Walnut Butter Cookies	73	100	51%	1	12	5	2	2	1	15	45	1	per cookie

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipegives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in

the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.

I Was a 98-Degree Weakling

hen it came to food, I used to have strict rules. If it gave off any tantalizing aroma, I avoided it. If it created any sensation in my mouth, I never tried it again. Anything that raised my body temperature even to normal was strictly verboten.

Hey, it wasn't my fault. I was born to an Irish mother in New Jersey, of all places. I was taught to consider boiled cabbage a challenging gourmet delight.

Okay, so maybe I did take it too far. "She's a picky eater," my mother would explain to yet another offended hostess. "Mom, this is really hot," I

warmth of the people. The food? Forget it. But three out of four ain't bad. I was eager to discover what lay beyond what I'd already experienced in Arizona. New Mexico beckoned.

A friend from New Mexico was eager to share the delights of his home state—

especially the food. But it was hot, he warned; would I be able to handle it? "Of course she won't," my husband laughed. "I'll have to bury her here!"

That was too much. Even wimps have their limits. I was determined threw caution to the wind and ordered something called carne adobada. How bad could it be?

One bite and my whole life changed. For one thing, I didn't have to worry about those pesky brain cells creating any more food rules. The top of my head had just been

long vacation. "All right," he sighed. "I'll change dinners with you. Mine isn't hot at all." He reached for my plate.

Having spent my formative years glued to TV westerns finally paid off. In a flash, I stabbed the interloper's hand with my fork. "My darling," I said tenderly, "try that again

> and it'll be your heart." I did give him a few tastes of my carne adobada, just so I could watch his eves melt.

> I stared death by chile heat in the face that night and found if you gotta go, that's the way to do it.

> More than just my taste in food changed that night. I became a different person. I shed all my inhibitions. Shed, nothing—I burned them out. I now stand at the top of life's mountain, eager for whatever waits ahead of me, no longer crying, "But I thought this was a beginners run!"

> I've also left my husband's taste buds in the dust. "You think this is hot?" I ask across the kitchen table. "Ha! Next time I'll make

it even hotter!" The sweat runs from his pores while I barely produce a glow.

I experienced a trial by fire—and lived to tell about it. Who would have thought?

Now if I could only learn to swim in cold water. ("This is really cold.") But what's life without challenges?

—Kris Neri, Granada Hills, California •

FINE COOKING

One bite and my whole life changed. My mouth exploded in flames. My body melted.

would cry in my own defense, as I scraped the sprinkle of paprika off the potato salad.

Of course, even wimps grow up. I had to, moving to California as I did, where I was continually assaulted with new cuisines and changing food ideas. I allowed my horizons to expand a smidge, but kept any suggestion of warmth in my food as my one nemesis. "This is really hot," I would whine to my husband. and he would know never to suggest that restaurant again.

I might have gone on like that forever had I not fallen in love with the Southwest. I loved the stark simplicity of the changing terrain, the natural beauty of the crafts, the

to look chile heat in the face and only the strongest of us would survive.

Our first meal in New Mexico was just a snack of nachos and beer. "This is really hot," I warned my husband warily. "You're pathetic,"

he snapped, insisting that these were no hotter than the nachos he made at home.

My first time out and I was choking. I wanted to cry. I wanted my mommy and her awful boiled dinner. My back was to the wall. I feared if I didn't go out trying I would never be able to face myself again. I rallied my courage and moved on to dinner. I

blown into the hereafter. My mouth exploded in flames. My body melted.

But you know, it wasn't bad. Bad nothing—it was great! Where had they been keeping this stuff?

"THIS IS REALLY HOT!" I sang to anyone who would listen.

My poor husband misunderstood and looked like he thought it was going to be a

94

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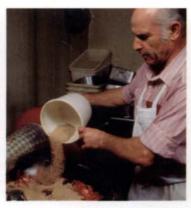
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ARTISAN FOODS

Pork and veal are always used, though the proportions vary, depending on the type of wurst. The meat is weighed on an old-fashioned balance scale. "We have no room for fancy gadgets here," says McMahon. "This one never breaks down."

The Best Wurst

"The wurst is at stake" is a German expression for those times when an important decision must be made—and an example of a people's passion for sausage. Ralph Brandt and Dave McMahon handcraft more than thirty types of wurst at the Norwalk Pork Store, their tiny shop in Norwalk, Connecticut. Using techniques perfected by Brandt over four decades of hand-making wurst, the partners work in small, 100-pound batches seasoned with special spice blends. This small scale allows them to keep a vigilant eye over every step of the process—the kind of care that's integral where hand artistry is key.



A chopper emulsifies the meat to a paste and saves the meat from going through repeated grindings. The paste should always have a high sheen, indicative of the meat's freshness and quality. Brandt adds salt, pepper, and spices in various combinations, depending on the style wof sausage.



The meat mixture is stuffed into casings to form long, continuous strands.

